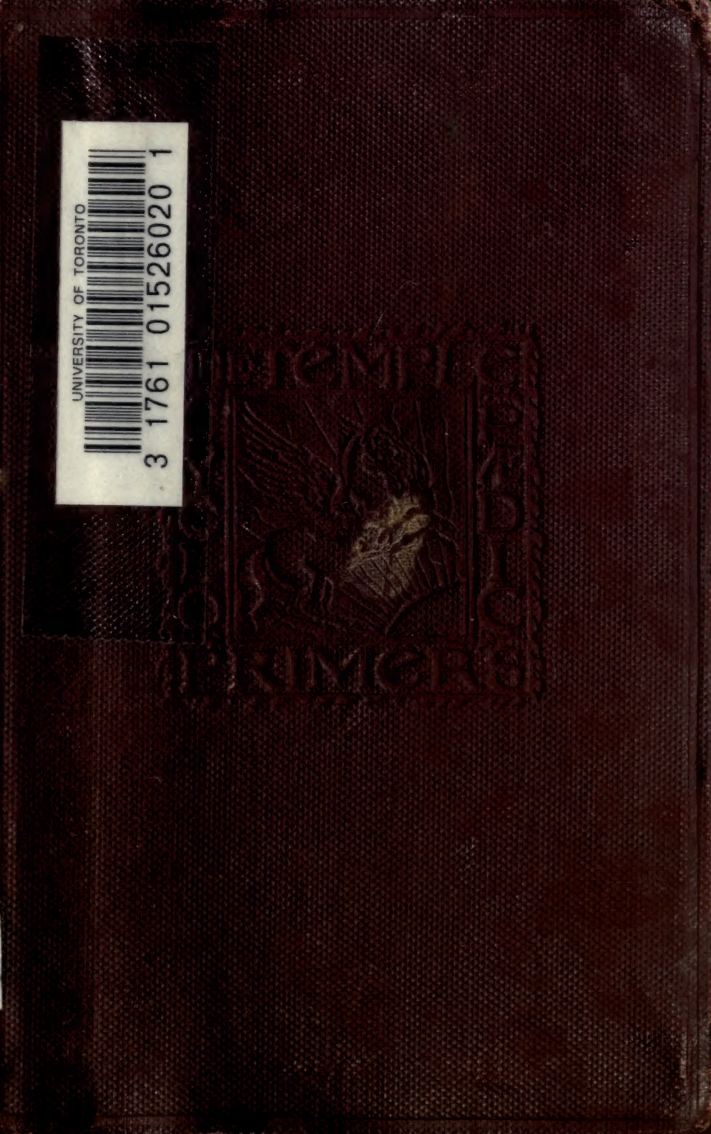
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MEDIÆVAL FRENCH LITERATURE

By GASTON PARIS

Académie française et
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MEDIÆVAL FRENCH LITERATURE

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MEDIÆVAL FRENCH LITERATURE

Introduction.

It is not our intention to offer in this little book what might be called a history of French Literature in the Middle Ages, nor will we attempt a more or less complete enumeration of the poets and writers and of the numerous anonymous works of old France. We shall endeavour, above all, to bring out the really significant features of the intellectual and artistic production of the French Middle Ages, in so far as it is written in the vulgar tongue. We will choose in this production whatever may be regarded as the expression of national genius, as an expression of an epoch and a medium, and all that has exercised influence upon the literary development of other nations. This body of literature will be considered principally from the point of view of its social aspect and its historical value.

This very word "literature" calls for a preliminary remark. To be accurate it applies only in an incomplete sense to our subject. It implies the idea of "letters," of writing, and a considerable portion of the works we are about to study was not originally produced in a written form. After the destruction of the official Roman Government, Western Europe in the Middle Ages found itself, in each nation, divided into two societies: the one, almost confounded with the Church, which continued or had revived the Roman tradition in language and literature, using grammatical Latin in writing and even in speaking; while the other, no longer acquainted with grammar or even generally able to read or write, spoke

only the popular tongue. It was this latter society, by far the more numerous, and above all its aristocratic class, which produced, in the epic, lyrical, didactic and satirical form, the first poetry of the modern Romance literature in France. Those who created it, and who for long developed it, did not write it, many of them doubtless not knowing how to write, and it was destined not to be read by the public for whom it was made, but to be sung or read aloud. Thus France found herself, after centuries of scriptuary culture, in the state of ancient India or of Greece in the heroic times, when memory alone served for the preservation of the works of the mind. It was only in a subsequent epoch that a few of the productions of the past, and which in their oral transmission, more or less slow, had necessarily undergone serious transformations, began to be written. What has been preserved is no doubt little enough beside that which existed and of which we can have but a vague notion. The most ancient redactions of national poems which have come down to us are due to Anglo-Norman scribes: French culture, introduced into England by the Conquest, was always somewhat artificial, and at an early date it was found necessary for the preservation of poems imported from France to rely on writing rather than on an ill-trained memory. In French we have no manuscripts of our oldest *chansons de geste* anterior to the thirteenth century, and naturally they are presented by these manuscripts in a very modernised form. Thus we have of the epic production anterior to the end of the twelfth century, with a few exceptions, but more or less free revivals, and even under this inaccurate and uncertain form we have only an almost insignificant portion in regard to what must have existed.

What is true of epic poetry is still more true of lyrical and satirical poetry. Of the former, which in its purely popular form must have been abundant, we have absolutely nothing of its first age, and a fashion for poetry at the end of the twelfth century and the beginning of the thirteenth was hardly able to save a few fine lyrico-epic songs of the preceding age.

"Courtois" lyric poetry was not written at its origin, either, or, when it was written, was consigned to loose leaves, none of which have reached us; we have only, for the twelfth century, anthologies compiled in the succeeding one. The oldest satirical poetry has also nearly vanished. The same may be said of essays, dialogues, and little didactic or descriptive compositions. To be accurate, it is only from the twelfth century that we can speak of French "literature" in the strict sense of the word; we apply it to the earlier period because there is no other, but we should limit its meaning.

Matters change in the twelfth century, and above all in the thirteenth, because a closer contact and more fertile relations have taken place between Latin society and purely French society. As early as the Carolingian epoch the clerks had begun to use the vulgar tongue in compositions destined for the teaching of the people. According as the division between the popular tongue and the Latin increased, the need was increasingly felt of communicating to the faithful ignorant of Latin the doctrines and narratives comprised in religion. On the other hand, once feudal society had broken away from the tumultuous period of its foundation, the laity of the upper classes, particularly the women, were no longer content with the martial songs or humorous tales of the "jongleurs," and begged the clerks to bring within their reach some of the books of antiquity in which they said that such fine stories were related and such useful lessons given. The clerks undertook the work, and found their profit therein, so that at the end of a certain time they took part, and a part increasingly considerable, in the production in the popular tongue, which henceforth fully merits the name of literature. Thus was prepared the modern age, in which, not without resistance, French, like other languages of Europe, ended by replacing Latin in all the domains of thought, of science, and of poetry.

The co-existence, in the social life of the Middle Ages, of the Latin and popular classes, of the clerical class and the laity, cannot be too insistently recalled to the attention of

those who would understand this epoch. In this consists its difference from the societies of India and Greece to which we compared it. Along with, and intellectually above the mass of the people—which sought its instruction elsewhere than in books, had its own poetry orally transmitted and incessantly renovated by the change of language—there dwelt a narrower circle of men who knew Latin, were acquainted with Latin antiquity, sacred and profane, and who alone, in the mediæval period, wrote history, cultivated theology, philosophy, and the little science that was saved from the shipwreck. This juxtaposition, unknown in primitive Greece, where writing was foreign to the whole nation, unknown in more recent Greece and in Rome, where writing was familiar to the entire nation, or at least to all of the upper class, has been a cause of striking inferiority for the popular literature of the Middle Ages. This literature was not usually cultivated by men who felt their intellectual value and superior knowledge. And when the clerks decided to take part in it, they introduced a culture, a science, and ideas which were not, as in India or in Greece, the spontaneous development of the national spirit, but which were drawn from a far-off tradition mechanically transmitted and most imperfectly understood. It was thus that the evolution of French poetic genius was constantly impeded, and sent astray, that it did not reveal itself with the freedom and originality which characterised more spontaneous civilisations, and that finally it failed and gave place to a literature national in its form, but on many points, in its inspiration, dependent on an antiquity better understood and utilised in a more fertile fashion.

But if, on account of the proximity of Latin tradition maintained in the educated class, French genius in the Middle Ages was not able to develop itself freely, it none the less displayed an extraordinary activity, produced remarkable works, and exercised a prodigious influence. We will chiefly confine ourselves to all that belongs most particularly to this genius in the immense literary production of the time, and before beginning to study it, it were well to

indicate the large lines which at a rapid glance this production presents as a whole during the centuries between the Germanic invasion and the Renaissance.

The great hold of French genius on the attention and admiration of history during this long period lies in the fact that it drew from its own store narrative poetry in all its various forms, historical, moral and descriptive poetry, humorous, satirical and lyrical poetry. It was in France that the new society, sprung from the German conquest, dared utterance in a poetry to which it itself had given birth, quite independent of that of antiquity. We must recognise, and will prove it later on, that this bold production of a popular poetry was probably due, at least in part, to the influence of German poetry, which existed before it; but the special characteristic of the French nation is precisely that it received a richer and more fertile Germanic afflux than any other Romance nation, and if our poetry owes its epic awakening to the epopee of the Franks or of the Burgundians, once started it completely freed itself of all imitation, and henceforth drew only from its native soil. In France, for the first time in the Romance world, national events and personages were celebrated in epical songs, from the Merovingian period to the end of the tenth century. If later France did not invent the *matière de Bretagne*, she transformed and marked it with her stamp, and it is thanks to her that the old Celtic tales passed to other nations and obtained a popularity which seems to have revived in our day.

Our poets as early as the twelfth century had the secret of seizing hold of stories of diverse origin, for the most part Greek or Eastern, that had made the round of the Mediterranean world, and of giving them a French form which was speedily translated and imitated, whether marvellous adventures, gentle tales of love, or coarse stories. They collected the scattered episodes of the mischances of the wolf and the artful dodges of the fox in a kind of animal epopee on Isengrin the Wolf and Renard the Fox. They did not stop at fiction: already both in the north and south they narrated

the Crusade of 1098, in which France played the principal part, under the form of the "songs of geste," but in a style closely bordering on history. Later on one of them made the expedition of Richard and Philip in the Holy Land the object of a poem altogether historical. In Palestine, become French from before the end of the eleventh century, contemporary history began to be written in simple prose, and, always to commemorate these far-off expeditions, Villehardouin and Robert de Clairi, in the beginning of the thirteenth century, related in the same way the wonderful events they had witnessed and taken part in. Almost at the same time, doubtless prompted by the translations from the Latin, appeared the first prose romances—*Lancelot*, *Merlin*, *Tristan*—which inaugurated a class of literature destined to have such a brilliant future.

What is true of epic poetry is also true of lyric poetry. If song in the strictly popular form has no doubt always existed among the various Romance nations, it is only in France that the aristocratic society transformed it to its liking, and created a new art which other races have imitated. At an early date also our poets composed bold satirical songs, and if we have lost the most ancient, we find the satirical style, absolutely indigenous, flourishing in the thirteenth century, and continued under the form of epigrams and songs even beyond the Middle Ages. Another altogether national class, bearing a resemblance to the former, is the short poem confined to the description of a town, a fair, a trade, a manner of living, or the moral poem, which, not indebted to religious teaching, expounds the laws of chivalry, the duties of a profession, celebrates the pleasures of the tavern and the excitements of games, or on the contrary seeks to turn people from them, exalts or disparages women,—in a word takes real or daily life for the subject of unpretentious verse.

It will be seen later on how the "jongleurs," direct inheritors of the antique histrions, but who only borrowed from them the tradition of their trade, recited for the amuse-

ment of the great, or for the entertainment of feasts or wedding parties, tales and facetiæ of every kind, and probably held debates or discussions, and even performed short scenes drawn from life. The oldest repertory that has reached us in the matter of tales belongs to the twelfth century, the facetiæ, debates and farces to the thirteenth; but this triple class was no doubt cultivated much earlier; it constituted a kind evidently less likely in the ancient epoch to be confided to parchment.

It is this really original production, spontaneously and heedlessly sprung from the new conditions of life, which forms the principal interest of French literature in the Middle Ages. Facing it is the immense production depending on Latin tradition. This belonged to the clerks, and, as we have said, it succeeded in dominating the other, in narrowing it more and more, and finally in almost supplanting it, or at least in insensibly influencing it and penetrating it with its own spirit. It should be divided into two groups whose frontiers cannot be clearly circumscribed. The first comprises translations properly so called, or adaptations of Latin works, in which the historian has only to note the fact of their existence, the blunders, involuntary and often instructive, which the translators and arrangers have committed in them, and the adventitious elements, borrowed from their time or their surroundings, which they have introduced into them. The second, whose importance continually increases, comprises a mass of works due like the first to the clerks, but in which they have treated the subjects, and more or less accepted the formulæ and processes of the national art. It is in works of this class that the literature of the Middle Ages has completed transition with modern literature; it is thanks to it that the French language has become capable of expressing abstract ideas, of constructing extended and balanced periods, and of becoming the organ of intellectual activity in every form.

To the first group belongs almost entirely religious literature. It opens with simple translations, in prose or verse, of

biblical works, of lives of the saints, and miraculous legends But at an early date, above all in the two latter classes, the adaptations freely surrender to the influence of popular literature or of their own surroundings, and soon we have "pious tales" which have no Latin source, and have spru g direct from the mediæval imagination. We must not, however, exaggerate their number or originality. Nearly all the marvellous Christian legends, in which we are accustomed to detect the stamp of simple mediæval devotion, are of Eastern origin, and reached our story-tellers through Latin intermediaries. They took shape in the Hellenised Asiatic mind, eminently fitted for fiction. The Western Middle Ages hardly invented anything in this domain, and consequently the greater part of the works of religious character which belong to the period are without historic value. But the ardent taste for tales of this kind that prevailed gave rise not only to innumerable lives of saints or pious tales, in prose and verse, but to a particular form of religious drama, "Miracle Plays," a dramatised version of some episodes of one of these lives or of one of these tales. The miracle play offered a supple and facile form to the dramatist, and was easily handled by the "unlettered" class. It is only at the end of the Middle Ages that we light upon the great hagiographic dramas, whose form was influenced by that of the "mysteries," and which present the same features as those vast compositions.

Even more than the miracle plays, the "Mysteries" belong to clerical literature. Brief in the beginning, and incorporated in the Latin liturgy, little by little they emerged from the Church, adopted the popular tongue, and, after a transformation we shall discuss later, ended by becoming those immense representations of the fifteenth century, whose entire frame is faithfully borrowed from ecclesiastical tradition, while in detail a large space is allotted to the portrayal of actual customs, to the popular and even comic element. But they are ever the work of the clerks, and have a doctrinal as well as a spectacular value.

The clerks were not only concerned with theology and ecclesiastical history; by an almost miraculous good fortune they had preserved a considerable fragment of classic antiquity. They were acquainted with Latin poets and historians, and soon studied philosophy, and, in such works as were within their reach, the sciences. From the twelfth century they began to communicate their instruction to the laity, and first of all to the lords and great ladies ignorant of Latin and even of the alphabet, but who had read to them the translations or imitations composed for them by the clerks. So the epopees of Thebes, of Troy, of Æneas, the histories of Alexander, Cæsar, the fables of Ovid, were put into prose and verse and more or less transformed by those who arranged them; even ancient history was written at length in French and Latin; the more recent and usually the more fabulous Latin chronicles were translated. Works of science were also written in the popular tongue, as well as encyclopedias full of notions of all kinds, often disfigured, taken from the most recent works of the classic epoch, or from mediæval collections which had already given extracts or summaries of them. They also borrowed from the Latin works of purely humane morals, like the *Consolatio Philosophiæ* of Boethius, or the distichs put forth under the name of Cato, or others something more than profane, such as "The Art of Love." All this labour, which only interests us as erudition, should not, however, be neglected, since it enriched the language and rendered it pliant, and spread among the laity an instruction of which hitherto it had little recked. It is interesting above all because it taught the clerks to write in French, and brought about the creation of that literature in popular tongue which insensibly carried onward the literature of the Middle Ages to that of the Renaissance.

The crowning work of this literature of the clerks is the second part of the *Roman de la Rose*, which marks the end of purely French poetry; this latter survived awhile, but had only force enough for a lyricism of quite conventional order or works of fugitive interest. The

chansons de geste, the Arthurian romances, the adventurous romances, the metrical tales, the "courtois" songs, all disappeared in the fourteenth century, and with the exception of Charles of Orleans, all the remarkable writers of the fifteenth century were clerks. But these clerks were much nearer to the laity than those of the preceding epoch; they were acquainted with antiquity, and often imitated it, but their way of thinking was French; in a word, they were what nearly all our writers from the Renaissance have been, minds fed upon antique tradition, but accustomed to express their ideas in a language no longer called "vulgar," and finding their inspiration in the sentiments and manners of their time.

We return to the beginning of this account to repeat that the word "literature" cannot properly be applied to French poetry or even prose in its first period. Poetry was not intended to be read; the poet only thought of those to whom his work would be sung in the case of "songs of geste," or recited in the case of romances; nay, lyric songs were made to be sung by those to whom they were addressed. It is true, the oldest prose narratives were dictated or written by the author, but from this narrative they were to be read aloud to those who wished to know them. This fact is of great importance; it explains the character of improvisation and the particular turn of style in many compositions; it also explains the anonymity of so many old poems, which were only written down after having long circulated orally, and the precaution writers took, as soon as manners began to change, to introduce in one way or another their names into their work. And even this precaution did not always succeed; often we find copies of the same work which have preserved the passage containing the author's name, and others in which it is suppressed, and many a work has reached us as anonymous which perhaps the author had signed in vain. Even to-day is not the public who reads merely for instruction or amusement, and with no artistic preoccupation, indifferent to the names of writers, often forgetting that of an author whose books it greatly

admires? In these conditions, even when the age of writing had succeeded that of purely oral transmission, poets and writers could not dream of reaping commercial profit from their works. These they composed in view of wealthy patrons to whom they offered copies, and who rewarded them to their fancy. If this lessened the writer's independence as well as his desire to give an artistic value to his production, it adds, on the other hand, an historic and social value to his work: for it represents rather the tastes of the exalted personage for whom it was composed than the author's, and thus affords us a notion of the intellectual, moral, and æsthetic culture of the upper class.

It would, in fact, be a gross error to believe that the literature of the Middle Ages, taken on the whole, is a "popular" literature. Those who made it, and for whom it was made, belonged certainly to the people (in the sense of *laici* opposed to the clerks), but this people embraced all classes, from the king to the artisan and peasant. Now it was assuredly not for the artisan and peasant that mediæval literature was made; if one of these took a part in it, it was through having left his class and become a clerk, or through having mixed with the chivalrous or burgess class. The real people in the Middle Ages knew as little of literature as it does to-day; less even, since to-day it reads, and writers cater for it. At most it possessed a few tales and songs of which the literature of the upper classes profited. Something of this literature ended, but long afterwards, by reacting on it; in the fourteenth century, and already in the thirteenth, the "jongleurs" sang "songs of geste," originally composed for the aristocracy, on the public places of towns and even of villages, and much later, when some of these songs were put into prose and were printed, they delighted, and in some cases have continued to delight, down to our own days, artisans and villagers. But in the beginning they were the joy and stimulant of feudal barons, whose ideas and sentiment and whose way of living they reflected. The same applies even more to the "courtois" romance and the "courtois" lyric, des-

tined exclusively for the chivalrous class, and often produced by it. Religious, moral, humorous, and descriptive literature naturally took deeper root, and the drama, religious and profane, was destined for all ranks of spectators. From the twelfth century the burgess class was interested in feudal poems, in which it was granted an increasingly large place. The importance of the middle class in the State was constantly growing; for it, above all, and by it, was composed didactic literature, and the *Roman de la Rose* became its favourite book, and inaugurated its literary predominance. But in its oldest and most original part the literature, and above all the poetry, of the French Middle Ages is altogether an aristocratic poetry and literature. That does not prevent it from offering us, especially in the epic poetry, many of the characteristics which generally distinguish popular art: a great simplicity of conception and execution, a marked preference for superhuman types and marvellous adventures, an indifferent care for probability and observation, a negligent form, and often trivialities and grossnesses. This was because the upper class was for long only distinguished from the people by its power, wealth, and warlike occupations. Except in what concerned personal vocation, it received no other education than that of the masses, it thought like the people except in the matter of pride and caste, and spoke likewise. After a certain moment matters improved: war became less continuous and leisure more frequent; the aristocracy instituted a culture of its own, in which women took a large part; the literature which imaged it, and was characterised by the name of "courtois," was the exclusive appanage of that portion of the nation which was initiated into this culture.

It suffices for the moment to indicate these general features, to which we will return afterwards.

I. The Merovingian Epoch.

We need not go back to the origin of the population that inhabited Gaul when the Franks established their domination. Ligurians, Celts, Iberians, Greeks, Germans had all been so thoroughly Romanised, from the Rhine and the Alps to the Ocean, from the Channel to the Pyrenees, that the ancient ethnical distinctions had altogether disappeared, and all the inhabitants of the seventeen provinces into which Gaul was divided only felt as "Romans" before the "Barbarians," who, first in the form of colonies introduced by the emperors, then as invaders and conquerors, had penetrated into their territory. The Sueves and the Vandals had only crossed it; but the Burgundians and Visigoths had definitely occupied the east, the south, and a large part of the centre; in the north-east, in a wide band, the Franks and Alemans had so completely exterminated the Roman population, that all this portion was henceforth torn from "Romania," and formed, with the South Danubian provinces, equally Germanised, the first base of what was to be Germany. Soon the Franks advanced beyond the territory they occupied, conquered the land between the Meuse and the Loire, then subjugated the Burgundians and the Goths, and Chlodovech reunited all Gaul under his domination with the exception of a stretch of land which remained Gothic in the south of Gascony, where the Iberians from Spain had established themselves, and of the west of Armorica, where the Bretons had gathered, chased from their native land. From this time and until the ninth century all this kingdom (to which the Narbonnaise was afterwards united) formed a more or less solid unity under the power of the Frankish kings. For the ancient name of Gallia was substituted the name of *Francia*, France—a name profoundly significative in its formation, since it is composed of a Germanic theme and a Latin termination. In the same manner a considerable part of our ancient poetry, the epopee, may, at least in its oldest monuments, be con-

sidered as representing "the Germanic spirit in a Romance form."

The *Romani* of Gaul all spoke Latin, but not all the Latin taught in the grammars. The use of Latin was modified by infinite degradations, from the most correct, still preserved in a few schools, to the most popular, already far removed from the former by pronunciation, morphology, and syntax. Nevertheless this vulgar tongue, up to the time of the invasion of the Barbarians, was not recognised as really distinct from the literary tongue. It was the contact with the *Barbari* which gave the *Romani* full conscience of this distinction. They understood that if their language was not the *lingua barbara*, neither was it altogether the *lingua Latina;* they named it *lingua Romana*—to which name the clerks added the contemptuous qualificative *rustica*—and said they spoke *Romane*, or oftener *Romanice*. This language, which the conquerors speedily learnt, gained thereby an increasing importance; however, it was only three centuries later that the Church decided to prescribe its use in the familiar homilies of the priests. So there were in Gaul at the Merovingian epoch —without mentioning the Basque and Breton corners—three languages: grammatical Latin, become a dead language artificially and more and more imperfectly preserved by the Church; the vulgar Latin or Romance, spoken by all the indigenous population, and even by the clerks when they left their own medium; the German, represented by the Frank, the Burgundian, and the Gothic, and destined to disappear promptly outside the limit in which it has held ground to our own days. Romance was destined to differentiate more and more from the Latin and to replace for the Germans their hereditary idioms. But at the same time it was subjected to a considerable influence from the conquerors who adopted it. This influence was greater in the north, where the Franks had penetrated in large numbers and for long were reinforced by contingents from their original country. It went so far as to familiarise Roman ears and mouths with the initial aspirate *h*, which for centuries they had forgotten;

not so in the south, where probably the Germanic *h* was never even heard (the French of to-day only succeed in hearing it with an effort), and where it was dropped out of the German words adopted. These words were numerous even in the south, but much more so in the north, and the quantity and nature of these borrowings show that the penetration of the Germanic element was intense, that it spread over all forms of life, and that the "Barbarians" not only brought the Romans a new method of practising war, government, and law, but new industries or the perfecting of old ones (for example, in wooden building, in the art of making thread or linen, in navigation), new fashions in dress (fur clothing), in drinking, hunting, and in amusements, and more precise observations in the world of fauna and flora. Borrowed substantives prove, however, nothing but exterior and superficial relations, but borrowed adjectives and verbs, expressing sentiments and sensations, attest an intimate exchange of ideas, and, on the part of the borrowers, a certain admiration for those whose expressions they adopt. This is still more strikingly evident in the fact that the Gallo-Romans completely abandoned their Roman names in order to adopt German ones. This seems to have taken place at first only in the upper classes, but little by little the habit spread among the whole people: at the end of the Merovingian period, save for a few names of biblical origin introduced by religion, only German names were to be found in France, names to which a Romance form was given both for men and women.

The Germans established in Gaul exercised, therefore, a considerable influence on the Gallo-Romans. But, on the other hand, they were speedily Romanised, at least as far as the language was concerned. They formed the greater part of the aristocratic class of the land, the rest of which was composed of ancient Gallo-Roman families. Between the two elements all distinction ended by disappearing; those of Roman origin bearing Germanic names, the Germans having forgotten their tongue, both speaking "Romance," having

adopted the same dress and leading the same life, professing the same religion and subject to the same kings. The real distinction which persisted in the new society was that of the clerks and the laity, the former, amongst whom there was soon a number of Germans, alone preserving in a way the tradition of grammatical Latin, the others, ignorant of letters and speaking Romance.

This is not the place to write the history of the Merovingian epoch, nor even to try to trace a picture of society in France during this period. Let us keep to what bears directly upon literature. That of the clerks grew gradually poorer, the schools being less and less numerous, the masters less and less learned; already Gregory of Tours wrote a slipshod and incorrect Latin, and displayed a penury of ideas and a puerile superstition which prove the decline of science and thought; the few chroniclers of the eighth century reach yet lower level. Official Latin was steadily influenced by the popular tongue; in the "formulæ" drawn up as a guide in the fabrication of juridical acts for notaries barely capable of copying them, the *lingua rustica* is visible incessantly under the form which fain would pass for grammatical. But there are naturally degrees in barbarism: we still have lives of saints belonging to the eighth century, written in a Latin nearly correct. This is almost the only literary production of the age. Poetry, save for a few epitaphs, had completely disappeared.

Did the Romance tongue, as a compensation, begin to manifest poetic tendencies at this period? We may think so with the greatest probability, though we have no absolute or direct proof. This language, in the time we are studying, was gradually breaking away from literary Latin, so that those who spoke it could no longer understand, even when they were read to them, works written in Latin. Now it is hardly admissible that for three centuries a nation as powerful, and, at certain moments at least, as prosperous as was the Franco-Roman nation, could have been absolutely destitute of all pleasures of the mind. We shall

see established in the tenth century, in the north of Gaul as well as in the south, a versification adapted to the Romance tongue; it is allied to the rhythmic versification which was formed in Latin itself, besides the metrical versification. This versification rests on a triple principle: the verse is composed of a fixed number of times; these times form couples in which one is more intense than the other; the verse that has more than seven times is divided into two members separated by a stop. These principles of rhythm are so applied to the language that the times are syllables, that the intense times are tonic syllables, and that each member of a verse ends by a word clearly separated from the succeeding word by the sense. It needed a long labour for these principles—to which was added the assonance of the final syllable of each line—to be adapted to the profound alterations suffered by the vulgar tongue in its vowels and consonants during the Merovingian epoch. Now this labour, which unfortunately escapes us in its details, was accomplished in the Merovingian period, and it should suffice to prove to us that there reigned then a poetic activity of which the scant documents scarcely give us an adequate idea.

This activity seems to have been exercised in several ways. Various evidence shows us that at the festivals—above all during the spring festivals, inherited from antiquity—the youth of both sexes danced to the sound of songs that the Councils condemned as immodest, and which were merely love-songs; that the repasts where the Romanised Germans gave themselves up for entire nights to their hereditary vice, drink, were enlivened by songs; that satirical songs were composed which the authorities were compelled to forbid. This shows us that popular poetry was abundant, and it is probable as well that in those days of exalted devotion to the saints and of pilgrimages to their tombs, there were also songs destined to their honour, for the union of the voices and souls of the faithful. At least we shall find the dancing songs and the satirical songs in the subsequent epoch.

This poetry may have sprung from the people—in accept-

ing the word in the general sense which embraces all the laity —but even since that period the *lingua Romana* had its professional poets. Already in the Roman days it was customary at feasts and festivals to have actors who recited verses, told tales, performed little scenes, played on instruments, and accomplished feats of dexterity and strength. These amusers of the rich and of the people did not give up their calling when the great public feasts vanished, together with the games of the theatre, the arena and the circus. They persisted under the new name of *joculares* or *joculatores*, and continued their different exercises in spite of the condemnation of the Christian moralists. We have already said that doubtless they transmitted to the succeeding age the tradition of humorous "debates"; we also know that they recited *fabulas inanes*. They contributed, no doubt, much towards the final formation of popular versification. But diverse circumstances were destined to give them a *rôle* of particular importance in the history of French poetry.

The Germans who established themselves in Gaul had a poetry of their own, lyric and epic. Their songs of love, war, and wine naturally died out in France with the language they spoke; but their epic songs even in France were not completely lost. Some of the elements of these songs are to be found in the French epopee, but above all, it is to them, in all probability, that we owe the birth of that same epopee.

We know through Tacitus that the Germans celebrated in epic songs the heroes of the past and the great events that happened. This habit lasted up to the epoch of the invasions that left their visible stamp upon the mediæval German epopee, which latter has as well a partly mythical origin. These songs continued to be transmitted orally during the Merovingian epoch amongst the German-speaking Franks, since Charlemagne was able to have them written out, and to compose a collection. The historians of the sixth, seventh, and eighth centuries have preserved for us recitals of the deeds of Merovech, Childerich, Chlodovech, and other Mero-

vingian princes, which have an epic character, and which doubtless proceed from epic songs. There is nothing improbable in the fact that some of these poems, mythical or historical, may have been imitated in Romance for the pleasure of the Romanised Franks who had retained the taste for and memory of their national poetry.

But these same Romanised Franks who passed on to their new language the poems they had loved in their first tongue must have preserved the taste for singing of persons and events around them in such a way as to strike the imagination. It is in this environment, which included certainly many Gallo-Romans by birth, that poems were produced, some of which have been summarised in the Chronicles, others of which have left traces in the posterior French epopee, while some even may still be traced in this epopee in a more or less modified form. The oldest is the story of a prince called in the French poem of the twelfth century which has reached us *Floovent*, a name referred to a Germanic *Flodoving* or *Chlodoving*, or properly signifying "son" (or "descendant") of *Chlodovech*. This young hero rouses his father's anger by affronting a great baron, is expelled from France, is rehabilitated after beating the Saxons and conquering for his father part of their country, and for himself a wife. Poems which now do not exist, but once did, turn on this theme of war with the Saxons, so frequent in the Merovingian epoch; a like feature may be found in the more recent songs that relate the Saxon expeditions of Charlemagne. A hagiograph has preserved for us by chance the Latin translation of a few verses of one of these poems, by which we see that it was composed in lines of ten syllables united in assonant *laisses*, like the posterior *chansons de geste*. What is most interesting is that the hagiograph tells us that this poem in the vulgar (*juxta rusticitatem*) was sung by women dancing. This shows us, as we know from other sources, that besides purely lyric and love songs, there were heroic and dancing songs; we also learn that the taste for epic songs had penetrated all classes.

But it is quite possible that at least a kind of national epopee was produced by the Gallo-Romans apart from the direct influence of the German epic songs. Chlodovech, in establishing in Gaul something like peace and order, in repulsing the Alemans, in embracing Catholicism, in extirpating Arianism, odious to the natives, became for them as well as for the Franks, a national hero. His marriage with Chrothild, his conversion, his baptism, the miracles God was believed to have wrought for him, seem to have been the object of poems which owe nothing, neither in matter nor in spirit, to the German epopee; but we dare not affirm that they were in vulgar Latin: it is even certain that there was at least one in grammatical hexameters. One way or another we may be sure that the Catholic *Romani*, from one end of Gaul to the other, saw in Chlodovech's accession to Christianity in its Catholic form an important and fortunate event, not only from the religious but also from the national point of view. The national spirit, which in Gaul had only existed for a moment to be crushed out by Cæsar, awoke both to action and to poetry; it embraced the Franks, in whom it saluted strength placed at the service of its aspirations, as men who had received from God the mission of combatting interior heresy and barbarous idolatry. It was by the fusion of this spirit with the more individualist inspiration of the German epopee that the national or royal epopee was formed. The French nation, in which we cannot distinguish Franks from Romans, is always presented as maintaining the cause of God; this feature, present from the origin, is still more accentuated when the secular struggle begins between Christian and Muslim.

The French epopee, born of this double current, flourished especially in the land lying between the Meuse and the Loire, that is, in Neustria and the portion of Austrasia which remained Roman. When, with the Austrasian family of the Pepins, a new German influence was felt, the epopee no doubt vacillated at first, but it rallied with enthusiasm round Charles Martel, the real heir of Chlodovech and Dagobert, who re-

made the unity of France, repulsed the terrible Muslim invasion, and once more reunited to the kingdom Upper Burgundy and Provence, which had become separated from it. We possess the trace of poems that brought him by name before the audience, and for instance celebrated his war with the Aquitains; he figures also in the song of *Girard of Roussillon*, though the hero is much less Charles himself than his powerful adversary. Here we see the beginning of what later on was to be the feudal epopee. In general the poems that celebrate Charles Martel have been annexed to those dedicated to his grandson Charlemagne; the identity of names inevitably led to this confusion. Thus, the story of the mysterious birth of Charlemagne, of his struggles on the death of his father Pepin against his two brothers, Heldri and Rainfrei, of his exile and triumphant return, really concern Charles Martel and his war with the Neustrian king Helpri and his mayor, Rainfrei. A large part of the epic stories of the wars of Charlemagne in the south refer originally to his grandfather. Finally, the celebrated poem of *Renaud of Montauban*—prelude, like *Girard of Roussillon*, of the feudal epopee—equally belongs to Charles Martel and his skirmishes with Eudes (Yon), duke of Aquitaine. These facts are amongst the most convincing of those which prove the existence of the French epopee before Charlemagne's time.

Although the Merovingian epoch, strictly speaking, ends in 752, with the accession of Pepin to the throne, we will speak here of that prince, considered as an epic personage, because his son's reign opens a new era in the history of the epopee, as well as in the history of Europe. Pepin was the hero of numerous songs, of which we only possess vestiges. His surname, "The Short," doubtless did not belong to him, and came to him from traditions relating to his grandfather; the story of his battle with the lion is rather a clerical than a really epic tradition; we cannot assert that the *rôle* he plays in the vast epopee of the *Lorrains* may be traced to older songs; but his wars with Saxon and Gascon were certainly

celebrated in both poems. The change of dynasty, which was speedily enough forgotten, had naturally struck the contemporary mind; a legend we only know imperfectly represents him as the elected by God Himself, and makes an angel intervene who, between Pepin and the last king of the Merovingian race, is said to have occupied the throne of France.

It was for these poems that the very form of French epic versification was created. It is composed of verses of eight, ten or twelve syllables, separated in two members, and forming *laisses* or tirades connected by assonance. The fragment of translation of the poem on the Saxon war shows us the decasyllabic *laisse* constituted in the seventh century. We cannot say whether at the primitive epoch the lines of each *laisse* were of fixed number, or if, as later, they were variable. They were sung with a rhythmic measure which was the same in each poem for all the *laisses*, and which in each *laisse* was the same for all the lines except the first and last, was generally followed by a refrain. They were accompanied by an instrument which was still perhaps the Roman lyre, but more probably the German harp, or the *rote* borrowed from the Bretons (a harp of small dimensions).

We cannot define with certainty the character of these ancient poems, state if they were short and of the style called lyrico-epic, or if already they were of greater length and of a more decidedly narrative turn. The fragment of the poem on the war of the Saxons seems to belong rather to the first kind, but the second must have developed early. The lyrico-epic songs might have been composed and sung by the warriors themselves, and we see by the text above quoted that they have accompanied dances. The longer and more properly narrative poems were made and sung by professionals. The Germans already had this class of men, whose name we know at least in Anglo-Saxon (*scôp*). In Gaul it was the *joculares* or *joculatores* who took their place, without renouncing, in general, their other exercises of acting

and juggling, they became the authors, and above all the propagators of the *chansons de geste*, a name only certified later, but which must go back as far as this period, and which signifies "songs of history,"—songs whose themes were real facts—and were particularly destined for men, whereas the songs of dance were addressed chiefly to women; these latter had perhaps already at this epoch weaving songs, made to charm the long hours of work in the gynecæum, and in which short love adventures were presented in a few strophes (of a like structure to those of the songs of geste), but without any historical pretension.

The language of the songs of geste, like all the other poetic productions of the laity, was Romance. This Romance, which had become clearly distinct from the Latin, was enriched by many a borrowed word from the Germanic idioms, and already by words recovered from the classic Latin which permitted it to express more ideas than it could have expressed with its own hereditary vocabulary, reduced to an extreme indigence by the barbarism and ignorance of the early Merovingian times. In fact, the clerks, who necessarily spoke the popular tongue, had introduced into it a large number of terms which they could not do without, while they allowed to filter into the Latin they wrote a great many words of Germanic origin from the popular tongue. As they went on, ever losing the true tradition of the classic Latin, their language insensibly drew closer to the vulgar, and it is quite possible, in spite of the existence of sacred and profane Latin books, which they preserved and copied, that the two would have ended by mingling altogether if Charlemagne had not restored the Latin grammar, almost abolished. The Romance tongue was nearly identical all over France, at least in the sense that it was reciprocally understood from one end to the other; but the dialectical differences, which were destined to be marked in the subsequent epoch, certainly began to be felt, although it would be difficult for us to point out those which were already noticeable. It was the national language of all the western and southern kingdom, while the east spoke

the language of the reigning family. Matters stood thus when Pepin died in 768, leaving the kingdom to his two sons, the eldest of whom, Charles, was destined to reign alone from the year 771.

II. The Carolingian Epoch.

At the end of the reign of Charles, so long and so glorious, Romance France was only a province of the vast empire that extended from the Elbe and the Theiss to the Ebro and the Garigliano. The real centre of power, splendour, and action was in Germanic Austrasia, where the King-Emperor had established his residence. Nevertheless Romance France, in its high ecclesiastical and lay classes, regarded as her own the restorer of the Western Empire, the heir of the Merovingian kings.

The existence of numerous poems which, through many a revival, may certainly be traced to contemporary songs about the events of his reign, the very surname *magne*, borrowed from the Latin formulæ, but become inseparable from his name, sufficiently prove it. The national epopee, formed in the preceding epoch, made the figure of great Charles the centre of its songs, and grew perfervid round his name and that of his principal warriors. The war of Italy (773–774) was the first event that inspired it: of the poems written from the purely regal point of view only a few traces have been preserved; much more important are those which celebrate, not precisely the Longobards, but Oger the Frank, the protector of Charles's nephews, who took refuge with these near the Longobard king: fresh proof of the existence of an individualist epopee as opposed to the national epopee. —Of the songs consecrated to the expedition of Spain (778) we have hardly any but, in a very altered form, that which deplored the surprise of the rear-guard at Roncevaux and the death of Roland, count of the March of Brittany: the

extraordinary importance attached to this event and to this personage show that the song has a regional origin (in the French Brittany), and thus attests the extensive diffusion of epic activity.—The wars with the Saxons and the Frisons, which occupied nearly all the reign, furnished this activity with material it largely used; but in the songs we possess, and which are of a much later period, there is nothing historical except the name of Guitequin and a few episodes more than one of which seems to hark bark to the Merovingian epopee.—Still feebler and almost null are the vestiges of poems destined to celebrate the combats with Slaves and Danes and the truly epic victories over the Avares.—The Arab invasions in the south of Gaul, which were repelled and had for counterpoise the conquest of the "March of Spain," belong to the end of the reign: the king who presided nominally was Louis, son of Charles, created king of Aquitany; but the real hero was William, Count of Toulouse, who, after a splendid career in war and politics, ended his days in the cloister which he had founded. Profane epopee and ecclesiastical tradition celebrated him with emulation. The first songs about his exploits, inaugurated by a glorious defeat and crowned by the taking of Barcelona, must have been composed in the south of France and in Catalonia; it is difficult to untangle the primitive nucleus in the mass of French poems, not very ancient for the greater part, treating of the subject, and which are mixed up with borrowings from the songs about the wars of Charles Martel and Pepin in Provence and the Narbonnaise.—It is quite probable that the most fascinating fact of the Restoration of the Empire—the coronation of Charles at Rome—may have inspired poetry, but nothing of it remains.—The construction of the palace and church at Aix-la-Chapelle, the solemn assembly of 812 where Charles associated his son Louis with the Empire, his death and burial about which fabulous tales were told, all this will be found in the subsequent epopee, but proceeds perhaps, at least in part, from simple traditions rather than from contemporary songs. Is it both in tradition and in the epopee that

the type of Charlemagne was created. As it figures in songs that have preserved something of the primitive inspiration: he is always old and full-bearded, of a superhuman majesty, prudent in counsel, still valiant in combat, just, pacific and merciful; he is the champion delegated by God to fight the infidel standing at the head of the Franks and the nations subject to them, and bringing about the triumph of right and the true religion. In that he is the heir of the tradition of the Merovingian epopee.

If the great personality and the marvellous reign of Charlemagne gave a new centre and an increase of activity to the epopee, his reign bore other consequences for French literature. We have seen that the Latin of the clerks became ever more incorrect, and in the course of the eighth century travelled towards a complete confusion with the Romance. Charlemagne warded off this danger—which if realised would have brought about the total ruin of all instruction—by bringing over from Italy, Ireland, and England lettered men who re-established the teaching of Latin grammar and orthography, revised the corrupted manuscripts, and constituted a Latin which, if not in absolute conformity with the antique models, was at least generally correct, and was the Latin used throughout the Middle Ages. These measures effected a far clearer division between the popular usage and the grammatical usage: the laity could almost understand the Latin of the clerks in Pepin's time, the pronunciation and many other features bringing it into connection with the popular tongue; but they understood nothing of the Latin spoken by the clerks belonging to the new school. The Emperor realised that such a state of things could not subsist, at least not as regards preaching (for the liturgy, it was maintained, in every Catholic country), and the Council of Tours, in 813, ordered the priests to translate *in linguam romanam rusticam* the homilies they addressed the faithful every Sunday. And so Romance was officially recognised as a distinct language, and, under the command of necessity, was heard even in the Church.

From that hour it began to be written, and the birth of the French literature of the clerks took place.

Having thus begun to address the laity in its language, the clerks did not stop at familiar instruction or at prose. As early as the Carolingian epoch they composed poems on edifying subjects, destined to be sung in the churches. A monk of the Abbey of Elnon or Saint-Amand (near Valenciennes) was pleased, in honour of a saint whose relics had been discovered at Barcelona, Eulalia, to imitate in French as well as he could the rhythm of a Latin sequence which he had probably also composed. It is a curious essay, which remained isolated, but which might have served as a starting-point for a whole Romance versification, if the Romance had not already possessed a versification spontaneously developed. To it had recourse the authors of the three other religious poems remaining from the Carolingian epoch. The first is in quatrains of two couplets of octosyllabic lines reunited by the assonance (couplets of short lines make a unity down to the twelfth century), and contains a summary, with some additions and interpretations, of the gospel story of the Passion: it was meant to be sung in church. It presents forms belonging to the whole of the northern dialects, and others of a southern character; for at the epoch (the end of the tenth century) in which it was composed, the Gallo-Romance speech had expanded in innumerable dialectic variations, which became confused one with the other by insensible deteriorations, but certain features of which did not respectively cross a wavering frontier, which spanned France from east to west, and divided it vaguely into two zones. The poem, at any rate, was originally composed in a more northern region than that in which it was copied in the sole manuscript which has preserved it to us; and it has been greatly rearranged. The other poem given by the same manuscript on another of the pages left empty on the Latin text, was also "meridionalised," but less completely; and without much difficulty it is possible to restore it to its northern form. It is a life of Léger, Bishop of Autun, adversary and victim of the mayor

of the palace, Ebroïn, in the seventh century, and regarded by his partisans as a saint and martyr. This life, probably composed at Autun, is in strophes of three couplets of octosyllabic assonant lines; it is merely the abbreviated translation, in a very simple style, of a Latin life. The third poem has quite a different character. It is a moral exhortation, of which we possess but a fragment, which sums up for lay use, but in transforming them into Christian precepts, and not without curious blunders, the teachings of the *Consolatio Philosophiæ* of Boethius, a work in which the whole Middle Ages delighted because of its symbolical setting, and which was often translated in verse and in prose. We have here only an imitation, whose author, an unlettered clerk, adopted the form of songs of geste (*laisses* of decasyllables). The dialect is approximatively that of Limousin or of Auvergne. We should note that the lines are almost rigorously rhymed: while in the north during another couple of centuries the poets are content with assonance, at least in this kind of verse, in the south they have already replaced it by rhyme.

These rare specimens of clerical production in the popular tongue have no literary value; at any other epoch they would not deserve to be mentioned; but they are interesting inasmuch as they mark the beginning of a literature destined to have a great future, and probably represent a much more abundant production.

A like claim upon attention has the text of the Oaths exchanged at Strasbourg in 842 between Charles of France and Louis of Germany, which the historian Nithard has handed down to us, with the German and the Romance formulæ side by side. It is only a short document, of no literary character whatever; but the fact that it was drawn up in French is a sign of the times.

This text, so precious from the philological point of view (it is the oldest we have in any of the Romance tongues), has also great importance from the point of view of the history of our nationality. The Oaths of 842 prepared the Treaty of

Verdun in 843, which constituted France and Germany, unfortunately leaving between them an undecided stretch, Lotharingia, which since more than a thousand years is a subject of disputes incessantly renewed. If in the kingdom of France, at the extreme north-east, in Flanders, was enclosed a patch of Germanic land, in Lotharingia (soon united with Germany to the Empire) were vast Romance regions (part of Walloon Belgium, French Lorraine, Franche—Comté, Romance Switzerland, Provence), that France succeeded in conquering, for the greater part, in the course of the centuries. Even in the Middle Ages, though depending more or less effectively on the Empire, these provinces were attached to France by their entire culture, and the literature they produced in French forms an integral part of our own.

The centre and heart of France is henceforth the land between the Meuse and the Loire, where the kings dwell, where the great towns stand, and where feudality begins to grow. Celtic Brittany remains outside, and in the beginning of the tenth century Normandy for a while is detached from it. South of the Loire a more and more feeble tie binds this very France of France to the provinces of Poitou, Berry, and others which are still more southward; Gascony, although nominally French, is as completely independent of it as imperial Provence. Nevertheless all these countries (save always the Basque and Breton corners) speak Romance, and productions in the popular tongue may blossom where they will, tinctured with dialectical shades, of which people become only conscious if—as in the case of the two poems quoted—they wish to transport a poem from one dialect to another.

The extraordinary epic production of the Carolingian period was developed in the thus limited kingdom of France. It divides into two groups of songs, that belonging to the royal or national epopee, and that belonging to the individualist or feudal epopee. The great sentiment of unity which filled all hearts under Charlemagne survived him a while in the present and remained strong in memory. It was also preserved by the persistence of ancient songs dedi-

cated, from Chlodovech to Charlemagne, to the glorification of Frank royalty and of those who helped in its work, songs of which a good many survived, were revised in form, and transmitted to the following age. We have a valuable reflection of one of these songs inherited from the eighth century and renewed in the tenth, in a fragment of a Latin poem of that century (the fragment of the Hague), and which shows us the Emperor Charlemagne besieging and taking from the Muslims a town of southern France or Catalonia. Besides the Emperor figure those who are destined later to be the heroes of the "meridional cycle" (Bernard, Bertram, Ernaud, Guibelin), and all are presented as the sons of Aimeri, count of Narbonne. This poem is certainly imitated from a Romance song inspired by the strongest royalist and national sentiment: Charlemagne is presented under the features we shall find again in the *Song of Roland*. This sentiment was bound to decrease and nearly die out in the incessant and confusing strifes that filled the ninth and tenth centuries. It produced, however, some interesting poems, of which unfortunately we have only disfigured vestiges, set in constructions of a different form dedicated to the wars of the French Carolingians in Italy. But this national feeling wakens up with splendour the moment young Louis III. wins on the invading Danes, curse of these unhappy times, the brilliant victory of Saucourt (881): thence a song which, mixed with other elements, has come down to us in the alterations of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries (*King Louis*). We only know by allusion another poem where king Louis IV. was connected with the Normans, become his vassals, and where the murder of William Longsword by Arnoul of Flanders (923) was presented as a just vengeance. Certain passages of the poems later on united in the extremely composite cycle of William of the Short Nose (confounded with William of Toulouse, of whom mention has been made above) evidently refer to poems in which were sung, in a royalist sense, the struggles between sovereigns and their vassals.

But this is the exception. The greater part of the songs composed at this epoch have a seigneurial character, and are more or less hostile to royalty: they do not go so far as to deny sovereign rights, but they pretend to submit their exercise to the will of the barons. This feudal element, which is found even in the songs that belong to the royal group, revives in a more independent spirit the old songs already of individualist tendency, like *Girard of Roussillon*, *Renaud of Montauban*, *Oger the Dane*. We have seen that even under the Merovingians, even under Charlemagne, the poets had at times taken the part of the rebels against authority: the Germanic spirit of independence had not abdicated before the national centralist and Christian tendencies which were formed under Chlodovech, and reached their apogee under Charlemagne. This independence was fully manifested in the period which saw the constitution of the feudal system, a period unspeakably tumultuous, a kind of dark and continual storm in which men and lands met in a shock during nearly two centuries, and which only ceased with the advent of the considerably weakened regal dignity of the House of Capet, itself its very product. It was in the midst of this disturbance that the activity of our epopee was exercised with the greatest ardour and fertility. The passions, the exploits, the adventures, the successes, and the misfortunes of the great barons are sung, whether they fight between themselves or against royalty. The type of these songs is the poem of *Raoul of Cambrai*, which deals with real facts in the year 942, and the rearrangement of which, much more recent, has kept for us the valuable passage in which the author of the primitive song, Bertolai, is pointed out, an ocular witness of the events. We must also quote the new parts of *Girard of Roussillon*, which treat of a Count of Vienne, enemy of Charles the Bald (changed into Charlemagne in certain subsequent versions), the historic part of *Huon of Bordeaux*, the feudal parts of *King Louis* and of the cycle of William, and no doubt many other songs which did not reach us.

We possess in fact none of the products of the Carolingian period in its primitive state. But we can, by the accordance of posterior poems, which have only revived, continued, and imitated those of the ninth and tenth centuries, have an idea of their form and the spirit which animated them. Neither one nor the other can have changed much from the Merovingian times, and, on the other hand, the processes we find in use in the poems of the twelfth century must have characterised those of the Carolingian times. In all the French epopee, as long as it develops spontaneously, we find the same fundamental characteristics. Let us note those which strike us most. A rudimentary manner of tracing characters, usually all of a piece, and, in the case of the heroes, often excessive, honest, at times brutal, sometimes powerful; the expression of passions peculiarly feudal, such as pride, hate, vengeance, with which is often associated the exalted sentiment of fidelity to the lord; an altogether Germanic conception of the family, of which all the members are jointly and severally responsible, and all, if it is offended, implacably pursue the *faide;* an almost complete omission of love, the women who exceptionally figure in the foreground having virile passions; a certain realism which almost entirely excludes the marvellous; a religion altogether exterior and practical, as was that of the times, and a very small part allotted to the intervention of the clerks; a great feeling of individual force, but without any search after chimerical adventures, and always employed in view of a useful effect, whether it regard the hero himself, the king, France, or Christendom. Some types, like Roland, Renaud, Oger, William, which subsequent poems certainly borrowed from the songs which had first created them, are impressive by their almost savage energy, and despite occasional violences are radiant with a real moral beauty. The greater part of the personages on the scene, good or bad, are what we call "impulsive," dominated by the present impression, passing in a moment from arrogance to humility, from fury to tenderness, weeping or fainting away under the influence of a transient emotion. The whole forms a unity which is not

lacking in grandeur, and which offers a powerful interest as a document upon the moral state of the French upper classes in that half-barbarous age. The opinion it helps us to form is not altogether unflattering to them: there is, after all, in all these poems a sentiment of equity as it was then understood, of fidelity, of loyalty, which shows that the barons for whom they were written took pleasure in the picture of an independent and seigneurial existence, subject to certain duties and guided by a certain ideal. The Carolingian epopee, if we had it in its first form, would be the ideal mirror of feudality in formation; as we have it, it is still of infinite historic value, and from the artistic point of view contains admirable parts.

Unhappily the form was not worthy of the inspiration. We can from subsequent poems be sure that the style of the Carolingian songs was simple, too simple, destitute of brilliance and true poetry; that too much space was given to discourses and dialogues, that the innumerable descriptions of combats were of a monotonous and conventional fashion; that the variety of tones, the wealth of detail, the grace mingled with force which compose the charm of the Greek epopee were lacking here. It cannot compete with ours: it was composed for men too immured within their castle walls and their coats of mail, too little endowed with imagination, of minds too closed, with too little of the poet and too little of the artist. But it remains an original monument, whose production alone is one of the most interesting of phenomena, which does honour to the nation that has produced it, and which, as we shall see, others have admired and imitated.

The versification of the Carolingian songs of geste is not directly known to us, but it certainly did not differ from that of the songs of the epoch immediately following, of which we have specimens, and we have seen that as early as the Merovingian epoch the principal features of epic versification were decided upon. The lines might have eight, ten, or twelve syllables; the poems were sung to the accompaniment of instruments of the preceding period (harp and *rote*), but above all of the violin (*vielle*), recently introduced from the

East, and which became almost the sole instrument of the singers of geste.

These latter, always called *joglers* or *jogledors*, and who generally exercised several talents for diversion of very varied kinds, were attached to lords or were hired by them for the moment, or else they went about the country, stopping at castles, and probably already in towns, and asking remuneration for the pleasure they gave. No doubt they began as the assistants and disciples of an ancient; they worked then on their own account when they had sufficiently learnt the trade, and had learnt by heart songs enough, for lhe idea of writing these down had not yet occurred. It is probable that it was they also who composed most of the poems, although it may be that some of the knights may have had taste and talent enough to make a few. At all events the jongleurs played a considerable part in the evolution and propagation of the Carolingian epopee; they transported from place to place regional songs, attached to the one the different events and personages of the other, and doubtless already added to the traditional foundation of the poems the stock commonplaces taken from the rolling stock of the epopee or from the fictions sprung from their imagination. To cite one sole example, it was they who chiefly contributed to the confusion in one character of the three Charles who figured in the songs of diverse origin, epoch, and inspiration—Charles Martel, Charlemagne, and Charles the Bald, all three sons of a Pepin and fathers of a Louis; this synthetic Charles, Emperor of Rome and of France, combats Heldri and Rainfrei, expels the Saracens from Provence, reigns at Aix-la-Chapelle, at Laon or at Paris, is the butt of suggestions too credulously accepted from the traitors, combats the legitimate rebelling of vassals unjustly ill-treated. It is to the jongleurs also that we owe the confusion of all the non-Christian enemies of the Franks (Arabs, Saxons, Slaves, Normans), become alike "Saracens," and adoring the idols Tervagant, Mahomet, and Jupiter. It was above all their exclusive care to keep their trade in practice, to renew entirely and almost unconsciously the

language of the songs they hawked about, which, at that epoch of purely oral transmission, brought about the loss of their primitive form, but which has permitted many of them to reach, more or less transformed, an epoch when they were written down, and thus preserved.

It is a piece of good fortune the other productions of the Carolingian epoch missed—and this is comprehensible—with the exception of the few clerical works we have cited. The existence of lyric poetry, of descriptive or facetious poetry, of satirical poetry at this epoch can only be inferred from the mere fact of their existence in the succeeding ages, or from a few fugitive indications. We know for example that it was customary to sing songs and tell humorous tales at the tables of the great, but of the former we have no traces, and hardly some Latin arrangement of the latter. Less reason yet have we to hope that a specimen might be found of the little dialogued scenes which the jongleurs assuredly acted; we must travel far before trouble will be taken to write down such futile and ephemeral productions, which must often have been almost improvised by their authors, though usually clothed in a versified form.

Let us note in conclusion that the first germs of the religious theatre were sown at this period. Already under Charlemagne, in the churches of France, dialogues were pronounced by interlocutors, whose costume symbolised the personages represented, and who filled up what might be called their *rôle* with appropriate gestures and movements. These scenes were intercalated in the offices of Easter and Christmas. This example was soon followed in the Germanic parts of the Empire. But these little scenes were very brief: their text was purely Latin, and nearly altogether taken from the Gospel.

III. The Five First Capetians (987–1137).

With the accession of this new dynasty, France decidedly gained consciousness of herself, and took on the form she was to maintain throughout the Middle Ages. The tie with Germany and the Empire was broken for ever. Royalty, supported by the Church, founded the principle of unique heredity, and consecrated it by the anticipated crowning of each king's eldest son. Its power was only effective in its own dominions, and even there it had to consolidate it by the repression of baronial revolts; but in principle the supremacy of Church and King was recognised first of all throughout the north of the country, and afterwards in the south, where, however, the link with the north was somewhat lax. Feudality was definitely constituted, and a unity of rights and duties joined all ranks, at least all men belonging to the warrior class and the Church. The burgesses of the towns were not long before entering this organisation; only the "vilains" remained deprived of effective rights, and were only protected by the benevolence or interest of their lords. No doubt private wars, recognised as a right by the feudal theory, often devastated the land, troubled the field labour, industry, and commerce of the towns; but all the same, peace and public prosperity made considerable progress, and continued to do so until the Hundred Years' War. Beside the hierarchy thus constituted a new "order" was created. Chivalry, which conferred on its members a personal dignity, and imposed on them at the same time certain duties which, if often enough ill observed, contributed none the less to raise their general morality. It was in this centre that the new sentiment of honour was formed and developed.

This French society of the eleventh century has produced great things. Once out of the stormy and confused state of the later Carolingian times, it felt a prodigious need of exterior expansion. French knighthood is everywhere in the

vanguard of the eternal struggle that Christianity continues to sustain against Islamism. The Normans—become by culture quite French—conquered Southern Italy and Sicily from the Arabs and Greeks, and formed a kingdom which for a time was of incomparable brilliance. The Burgundians took Portugal from the Moors, and founded there also a kingdom. France played a preponderant *rôle* in the first Crusade, and the kingdom of Jerusalem was altogether a French kingdom. On the other hand, the Normans in 1066 took England, an event which created for many centuries a powerful rival for the king of France, but which turned England, from the point of view of culture, language (in the upper classes), and literature, into a real French colony, like Sicily and Palestine.

The march of minds did not remain behind the march of exterior movement. It was then the great superior schools of the Middle Ages were founded, at first in the abbeys, above all Norman, then in towns like Chartres, Orleans, Tours, Reims, all soon eclipsed by Paris, thanks to the teaching and prodigious success of Abailard. Romanesque architecture attained the plenitude of its admirable development. Works of philosophy, theology, and history were produced in numbers, and Latin poetry was revived with Hildebert, Marbode, Baudri of Bourgueil, and others. The great figure of St. Bernard altogether dominated Christianity.

In the lay society also everything was in a state of ferment and lived a new life. The French invention of tourneys had given to chivalry its assemblies and ritual games. Castles sprang up on all sides, built by architects whose science and ingeniousness in the combination of means of defence we still admire. On the occasion of their tourneys, in these castles, in the courts of kings, men and women began to gather and enjoy the pleasures of society. Instruction—inseparable from Latin—was still rare in the upper classes, but, having ample leisure, they felt the need of occupation for the mind, and while cultivating and reviving the old traditional poetry, they became more and more desirous—above all the women—of sharing in a measure the science of the clerks.

The Romance tongue naturally became more and more differentiated; from Liège to Gascony, from French Brittany to Provence, it presented an infinite variety. Poetic works saw the light in divers places, each one bearing the stamp of local speech. But the influence exercised by those poems which had the greatest success, the tendency to imitate them, the poet's desire of being understood outside a narrow circle, and above all in royal and seigneurial courts, the perpetual transport of poems from one region to another by the jongleurs, brought about little by little, or at least prepared, the formation of two literary languages, one of the north, the other of the south. We possess too few works of this period in their original form to know how far this instinctive labour had already been pushed: in so far as regards the north it was not finished before the end of the Middle Ages; in the south, where it was more complete, it was arrested by the insensible extinction of literature in the language of the country.

With the tenth century closes the era of the production of spontaneous epic poetry concerned with contemporary events. It is a mistake to assimilate to the old songs of geste the poems inspired by the first Crusade. They have only the form of these songs; their character is quite historical, and is even based in part on narratives written in Latin. The history of the Holy War has been done in the verse of songs of geste both in the north and in the south. The Flemish pilgrim Richard appears to have composed his *Chanson d'Antioche* towards 1130, and to have brought it down only to the taking of Antioch; it was continued afterwards down to that of Jerusalem. About the same time as Richard —the Limousin Gregory Bechada wrote his *Canso d'Antiocha*, from the recitals of eye-witnesses, in *laisses* of rhymed Alexandrines, terminated by a short feminine unrhymed line, a form which seems to have been much in favour in the south. His poem, of inordinate length, and which, despite its title, comprised also the taking of Jerusalem, is almost altogether lost; it is much to be regretted, for it was quite an original

and independent document; but in spite of many legendary features and others, purely imaginary, due to the writer, a poet of talent, we have enough of it to see that it was not a song of geste in the real sense of the word.

As for the real songs of geste, the activity of the epoch we are studying consists in reviving those of the anterior period and in creating new ones which are either imitations or pure inventions, and which always place the scene of their tales in the past, as a rule in the epic ages, pre-eminently under Charlemagne. We are not generally acquainted with these adaptations or these new creations except through the alterations of the succeeding period; however, we have the good fortune to possess in the form they took in our period, only altered in a few exterior details, two revivals (one whole and one a fragment) and one altogether original work.

Of the revivals, the most important by far is that of the song sprung in the eighth century from the disaster of Roncevaux. From the beginning it had a very great success, and was transmitted through the entire Carolingian epoch, ever enlarged by new episodes and drifting further away from the reality of the facts that had given birth to it. Produced in the March of Brittany, it seems to have been refashioned in Anjou, then in France proper, where it became the pre-eminent national poem. The manuscript which has preserved for us the form of the eleventh century is only of the end of the twelfth, and Anglo-Norman; some traces of Norman alterations may be found. The present redaction of the poem visibly owes much to the intervention of a clerk, who has accentuated the religious element. It is formed of three parts: the first goes as far as the too tardy return of Charlemagne to Roncevaux, and the massacre of the Saracens, authors of the disaster, which he accomplishes by miracle. For a long while the song no doubt went no further, adding only the torture, at Roncevaux itself, of the traitor to whom the defeat was due. The third part, evidently subsequent, pushes vengeance further: Charles takes Zaragossa, and returns to France, where Ganelon is solemnly judged at Aix, and, his champion being overthrown by an Angevin

knight, is quartered. Between these two parts the author of our version has intercalated and most dexterously fused with them a poem originally independent and purely imaginative. Vengeance is still more striking here: Baligant, chief of all the "Pagans," comes from the East to fight Charlemagne, and is vanquished and killed by him. Out of all these elements, the last arranger, whom we may place towards 1080, has fashioned a poem in which contradictions and obscurities are not lacking, but which is presented on the whole with a certain unity and an incontestable grandeur. His work had an immense success: it inaugurated the imitation of our songs of geste by other nations. It was put into German verse as early as 1130, later into Norwegian prose and into English verse, at an early hour penetrated into Italy (even doubtless in a rather older form than ours), where from arrangement to arrangement it was destined to end in the poem of Pulci, was accepted in Spain, and became there the starting-point of the national epopee: it cast abroad on all sides the names of Roland, Oliver, Turpin, Ganelon, and Charlemagne. The religious spirit—which the alterer had emphasised, while allowing the national inspiration and the strong sentiment of personal honour which constitute its soul, to subsist—contributed to this success in bringing out above all, in the drama of Roncevaux, an episode of the struggle between Christian and Muslim. Pathetic and captivating scenes, like the quarrel, twice brought about for totally different reasons, between Oliver and Roland, the death of Roland, the regrets of Charles over his body, could be understood by men all over Europe, and revealed to them a new form of beauty which their admirable national epopee did not furnish even to the Germans. The *Chanson de Roland*, as the arranger of the eleventh century has fashioned it, is the dominant work of the French Middle Ages: it sums up their highest ideal, it presents their most powerful effort, it transmits to posterity all what those times contained most vital and lasting—sentiments of patriotism, honour, and duty—and it deserves to remain always for France a truly national work.

We must only regret that the form is not more brilliant and of more poetic value: it shows many of the weaknesses we have pointed out in all this epoch. It is, however, clear and simple, which facilitated the adoption of the poem abroad; at times it is not lacking in power (as in the picture of the *grand deuil* of Nature at the hour of the hero's death). Padding is very rare, and the expression, monotonous in appearance, reveals, when studied closely, many a delicate shade. The language is that of the west of France (comprising the royal domain), and it is in this region that the poem was born and became transformed since its birth.

The primitive subject of the second poem, *King Louis* (or *Gormond and Isembard*), is the victory of Louis III. over the Danes at Saucourt (881). Of the version of the first third of the twelfth century we only possess a few hundreds of lines; but this fragment is of great interest, through its peculiar form (it is the only song in assonant *laisses* of eight-syllabled lines) and its alert and vivacious style, partly the result of this form. Fictitious elements sprang up round the primitive fact which gave rise to the song: a feudal inspiration is mixed with the national inspiration. The barons of France only assist king Louis (naturally confounded with Louis I.) against the pagan king Gormond (brought into France by the renegade Isembard) on the assurance of the heredity of their feudal tenures. This song, born in the very land where the battle took place, continued to evolve there: it was in Pontieu or in the neighbouring Picardy that it underwent, in the beginning of the twelfth century, the alterations which have partially reached us, and in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries it was submitted to others.

The short song of *Charlemagne's Pilgrimage*, which we can trace back to about 1060, is of Parisian origin. It is the only work of such a distant date that we possess in its original form (the single manuscript of the fourteenth century, and Anglo-Norman, simply altered the language in a reparable fashion). It already gains thereby enormously, but this price is considerably increased by the character and poetic value of

the song. It is a pure invention, or at least it attributes to Charlemagne and his peers fabulous adventures, whose framework perhaps belonged to folklore, but all the detail of which was created by the poet. And these adventures have partly a comic character: the poet seeks to provoke laughter, although a part of the poem is serious and religious. The inspiration of this epic tale, which was sung at the fair of the *Endit* (where the relics of the Passion were exposed, said to have been brought from the East by Charlemagne, diverse legends having sent him thither), is quite patriotic—if one may say so, "chauvine"—the French are shown victorious over all other peoples, their king triumphing over every other king, and God protecting them in a special way, even when they commit follies. The tale is told in a thousand assonant lines of twelve syllables, of a sprightly turn, of a concise and lively style, and forms a real little masterpiece, in which we detect the first appearance of what is called the Parisian spirit.

With less certainty, but still in all probability, may we assign to this period a revival and two creations belonging to the meridional epic cycle. We are assured by accurate witnesses that in the south, as well as in the north, songs were made about exploits accredited to a hero called William *Fièrebrace* (Strong i' the arm), William "of the short nose," William of Orange, in which many personages of the ninth and tenth centuries were confused with William of Toulouse. The recapture from the Saracens of the towns of the south (Arles, Nîmes, Narbonne, Carcassonne), though it dates from Charles Martel and Pepin, and the conquest of Catalonia, though accomplished in the name of king Louis during the life of Charlemagne, were attributed to the same time. Of all this we possess little that is ancient. The poem of the *Crowning of Louis* is attached to this cycle by the fact that William is the hero: it is a compilation dating from the first third of the twelfth century (but the form in which we possess it has been renewed), of episodes, one of which preserves the memory of the ceremony of Aix-la-Chapelle (812), when Charlemagne crowned his

son, and presents the most energetic expression which epic poetry has given to the idea of the supremacy and the mission of French royalty, other episodes are evidently drawn from poems relative to the struggles of the last Carolingians against growing feudality; another has preserved the memory of the invasions of the Arabs in Italy in the ninth century, and the part the French took in the defence of Rome. The first part of the *Charroi de Nîmes*, is a pure invention, but of a striking epic grandeur, and explains marvellously well the double feudal sentiment of loyalism and independence; the second part is an anecdote of martial folklore which we find again in many places and periods.

There is yet another song whose revival may with probability be attributed to this period: the Merovingian song of *Floovenc*, in which the Germanic surname of the hero (*Hlodovihg*) was taken for his name. Many poems, which we only possess in their subsequent form, have at this epoch certainly suffered alterations which we can only suppose.

Thus the songs of geste continued to be the great poetic recreation of the barons, and began to spread amongst a wider public. The jongleurs carried them from castle to castle, from town to town, everywhere welcomed, and pullulating the more because there was more peace and leisure than of old. They took part also in warlike expeditions; in 1066 one of them, Taillefer, who, by a rare chance, was also a combatant, struck up the *Song of Roland* at Hastings, when the Normans began to attack the Saxons; another, towards 1070, preceded Burgundians who went to besiege Chatillon-sur-Loire. They generally sang to the accompaniment of the *vielle*, but they could do without it. Many knights knew epic *laisses* by heart, and sang them for their own or their companions' pleasure: the national epopee replaced for the society of the period at once theatre and reading.

But the epic ballad was not the whole of poetry. As early as the second half of the eleventh century a new "matter" had come from Celtic lands—French Brittany and Wales—to charm the aristocratic society of France and England;

in this latter country it had often passed through an English intermediary. Its propagators were Breton or Welsh musicians, who executed what they called *lais*, that is to say, short pieces of music played on the harp or *rote*, accompanied by songs, of which we cannot say with certitude if purely lyric or already narrative, or even if they were written in Breton or already in French. The *lais* related love adventures or fairy tales whose heroes belonged to Celtic tradition, and those who executed them added an oral commentary in which the adventure was recounted. It was probably through the channel of these same musicians that the entire mass of the epic tradition of the Celts of Great and Little Britain was spread over France. The centre of this tradition was Arthur, the historic hero of the struggles of the insular Britons with the Saxons, transformed by legend into a powerful king. Arthur grouped around him invincible heroes, notably his nephew Gauvain, Kei, Bedwer. After innumerable conquests, betrayed by his nephew Modred and his wife Guenievre, he fought a terrible battle with the usurper, in which he killed him, but in which he himself was grievously wounded, and was carried off in a mysterious bark to the "land of Eternal Youth," whence he was to return one day to repulse the Saxons and restore once more Breton power. French imagination was captivated by the fantastic character of these tales, wherein the most marvellous features mingled, in which love played a great part. Thousands of story-tellers—Breton and French—spread them throughout the big and little courts of France and England. Were they already put into verse? This we cannot affirm. If they were, it was not in the form of assonant *laisses*, which was felt to be unsuitable for them, but into those couplets of little octosyllablic lines which as early as the tenth century were used in narrative poetry not properly epic. However it may be, their popularity spread rapidly even beyond the Anglo-French world, since as early as the beginning of the twelfth century we find in the north of Italy, then open to every French influence, children receiving the names of Arthur or Gauvain, and at the same

epoch a bas-relief of the cathedral of Modena represents an episode of one of these tales in which figure Arthur, Gauvain, Kei, and five other personages who are to be found almost all in the subsequent romances. These primitive recitals, for which Arthur was only a pretext, were above all of a bellicose character; but, like the *lais*, they gave a large place to marvellous adventures and the loves of the heroes, and in that they contrasted with the austere tone of the songs of geste. Doubtless, at the same time as the Arthurian *lais* and tales, were introduced those which sang of Tristan and his lasting love for the fair Iseut of Ireland, wife of King Mark of Cornwall, ending in the death of both. We must remark the audacious attempt of a Welsh clerk, connected by education with Anglo-French culture, Gaufrei of Monmouth (dead 1154), who, relying partly on Welsh or Breton tradition, wrote in Latin the pretended authentic history of the kings of insular Brittany, from Brutus, son of Hector, to Arthur, and further still. He introduced therein a strange personage—partly of Welsh tradition, partly his own invention—the wizard Merlin, son of a demon and a woman, to whom he dedicated a special poem. His book, accepted as history by the greater number of his contemporaries, had a certain though tardy influence on the French Arthurian poems; at any rate it contributed to spread the knowledge of the *matière de Bretagne*, and to raise it in public esteem, the more so as it was speedily and more than once translated into French.

The Breton tales were not the only complement of the songs of geste contained in the repertory of the jongleurs. They certainly still recited *fableaux*, but we have none of this date. We know that in 1112 at Laon the stories of Renard were so popular that the people could choose nicknames from them; they must have had a poetic form in all the north-east, for towards 1147 a Latin poet of Ghent, called Nivard, produced an imitation of many of them, which, in this land of Flemish speech, must have been fashioned from versions already indited, and not on simple oral recitals.

The poetic productions which the jongleurs sang or recited were far from being always edifying; but for the services held on the eve of days dedicated to saints, or to please pious persons, they had their religious repertory, supplied by the clerks, whom, in the tenth century, we found rhyming the *Passion* or the *Life of St. Leger*. A poem has reached us which is believed to have been composed towards 1040 by a canon of Rouen called Thibaud of Vernon, and which makes us deeply regret that we possess only this one of the analogous works a contemporary attributes to him. Differing from the two anterior poems, the *Life of St. Alexis* is in assonant *laisses*, like the *chansons de geste*, but these *laisses* (numbering 125) have each only five lines. The poet has followed, in abridging it, a Latin life which is itself but the translation of a little Greek romance about this ascetic of the fourth century. But he has allowed himself free play in order to develop certain indications of its source, notably the lamentations of the father, the mother, and the wife of Alexis when they discover that the poor invalid whom they sheltered seventeen years under the staircase of their palace, and who had given up the ghost, was none other than their son and husband, who had chosen this refined form of penitence after having fled from his house on the very day of his marriage. The poet has evidently modelled his style in these pathetic passages on that of the songs of geste of his time, and we obtain a most favourable impression of it by the energy, the simple elegance, and the grace he displays. His work had a great success, as much because of the subject as for the form, and was revived for the use of the jongleurs in the twelfth, thirteenth, and fourteenth centuries.

The *Life of St. Brendan*, composed in 1121 by a certain Benedict for the Queen of England, Aélis of Louvain, is destined to be read and not sung. It gives in eight-syllabled rhymed lines, of a not unpleasing simplicity, the adventurous history of an Irish saint, which is but an ancient Celtic Odyssey Christianised.

In southern France too did the clerks use the popular

tongue for the edification of the people. We have already noticed the imitation of Boethius; leaving aside some canticles or prose sermons, and a fragmentary translation of the Gospel of St. John, all of which belong to Limousin, we find in our period a poem of some length, in rhymed *laisses* of octosyllabic verses, of a somewhat quaint style, in the honour of St. Rides, which was destined, probably, to be read before the pilgrims who came from the southern provinces to visit her renowned sanctuary in Agen.

In quite another region of the south, the first profane work of a clerk with which we are acquainted appeared: the *Alexander* of a certain Alberic, whom his German translator calls "of Besançon," but who, judging from the language, was rather of Briançon. He extracted from a Latin abridgment of the Greek romance on Alexander the Great a poem which he does not seem to have finished, and of which we have but the very beginning. He wrote it in the form of the songs of geste, which proves, no doubt, that they were flourishing even in his far-off region, and with him this form is that of short *laisses* in octosyllabic lines (like those of the *King Louis*) almost exactly rhymed. He treats his source very freely, and altogether transports the story into a mediæval setting; he designs to make a real song of geste of it, and in this his work is interesting. It had a considerable and prolonged success. In 1130 the German clerk Lambert translated it, and added a continuation taken from another source. Almost at the same time it was remade in Poitevin decasyllables, and later on it served as basis for the *Alexander* of Lambert le Tort (of Châteaudun), afterwards enlarged by Alexander of Bernai or of Paris. Other poems of pure invention, from the twelfth to the fourteenth century, were grafted on to this trunk. Despite their popularity, in general they are of small value. They serve to show us the easy and rapid circulation which certain literary works were able even then to enjoy: a poem composed in Dauphiny is refashioned and continued, in the space of nearly a century, in Poitou, in the country round Chartres, in Paris, in Beauvais, in

Champagne; it is famous in the thirteenth century throughout France and as far as Palestine; and in the fourteenth century Walloon poets gather to add still new "branches" to it. We note also that there is no separation between the south and the north: the Poitevin, placed between the two, is content to accommodate to his dialect the verse of the Dauphinois, and the Frenchman in turn adopts that of the Poitevin in eliminating only a few rhymes.

About the same time there arose an educational literature, composed by the clerks for the laity, almost constantly in the form of little couplets. It had generally, above all, at this early epoch, a religious character; nevertheless, this character is precisely lacking in the oldest specimen that has reached us, the translation of the Latin poem of Marbod on the virtues of precious stones (*Lapidarius*). It treats of Eastern superstitions—invented and propagated by stone merchants—which were taken for scientific and practical truths; the edifying "moralisation" which was introduced into one or other of the subsequent *Lapidaries* (for there were many) is absent here. On the contrary, it forms the basis of the *Bestiaire*, translated shortly afterwards (towards 1130) by the Anglo-Norman clerk Philip of Thaon for the Queen Aélis, second wife of Henry I.; it is an originally Alexandrine work, of a symbolism at once subtle and infantine, which charmed the entire Middle Ages (since Philip it has been put into verse and prose many times), and has largely inspired decorative art; it consists in the enumeration of the properties, nearly all imaginary, of certain animals interpreted as symbolising the teachings of Christianity. The same Philip, in 1119, had put into verse for the Anglo-Norman priests the ecclesiastical *comput;* in appearance a singular idea, which proves how little instructed these latter were in what they should know best and first of all in the Latin tongue.

Purely religious teaching is conveyed in a very fine poem in six-syllabled lines, which gives a terrible dialogue between the soul and the body of a dead sinner, each

casting reproaches and tardy regrets at the other; in a sermon, also in six-syllabled lines (but crossed), which has a certain simple charm; and in a strange composition on the Last Judgment, in lines of twelve assonant syllables. The two first of the poems may be French (of the Isle of France), Norman, or Anglo-Norman; the third is Walloon. Let us note again the *Epître farcie* on St. Stephen; it is the most ancient of these compositions, where a short history of the saint is put into strophes—here of five assonant deca-syllables, like the *Alexis*—which the people sang alternately with verses from the *Acts of the Apostles*, sung by the clergy; it comes from Louraine. We have only the beginning of a curious little poem in strophes of two octosyllabic assonant lines, followed by a short line without assonance, which borrowed from the *Canticle of Canticles* an allegory which it applied to the contemporary events that happened in the Church; it appears to belong to one of the provinces of the west.

What is more curious than these works of the clerks is the *Sermon* in *laisses* of rhymed Alexandrines, which, before 1137, a nobleman, Guichard III. of Beaujeu, composed, having retired to the cloister after a stirring life; he preached penitence and contempt of worldly existence. It is probable we only possess his work in an altered and amplified state; such was its success that the clerks called its author *Homerus laicorum*.

We have referred to the first services of a dramatic character introduced into public worship. They were developed at this period, and French refrains were introduced, as Hilary, Abailard's disciple, did in two of his little liturgical dramas (*Lazarus* and *St. Nicholas*), and as the *juventus* (young clerks) of Beauvais did in a *Daniel*. In a church of the Angoumois, to judge from the language, such refrains were supplied to a scene representing the parable of the Wise and Foolish Virgins (*Sponsus*), and later on, entire strophes in Romance were added. Religious drama in the French tongue was ready to arise.

We return to the lay and profane world with what we have to say of lyric poetry in the eleventh century and in the middle of the twelfth. Of a surety it continued to live throughout France in its popular form of songs of spring feasts, dance songs, and satirical songs. We know that at the time of the first Crusade the French marched to the sound of a song of which the refrain was "*Oltreie!*" (Forward!) and which spread over all Europe, and that during that same expedition many a satirical song was composed. We know that towards 1120 a Norman knight, Luc de la Barre, composed mordant songs against the King of England, Henry I., which he cruelly expiated. But we have no specimens of any of these songs. It is, however, perhaps not too bold to trace back to this period certainly the oldest of the "weaving songs" that has reached us. It represents with a captivating simplicity, and with a remarkable archaism of formulæ, an episode in itself insignificant: the reconciliation of two lovers, one unjustly suspecting the other, who seeks self-justification in the antique system of "cojurators." These few strophes of five assonant decasyllables supplied with a refrain are of a most spirited turn. Another "weaving song," whose subject is the abduction of a young girl by the knight she loves, in strophes of decasyllabic lines, all with feminine endings, is equally archaic in colour, and is real poetry, with its most popular refrain: "Let the wind blow and the branches tremble! Softly sleep those who love."

But it was in a more southern region that at this epoch the true lyric poetry of the Middle Ages was to arise and be developed later on. It seems to have issued in Poitou and in Limousin from the simple dancing songs which had never ceased to be sung, and particularly from May songs, from which it borrowed certain data, like the praises of spring, become almost an obligatory formula; the constant union, in another formula, of joy and youth; the conception of marriage as a slavery woman seeks to escape. As early as the eleventh century certainly, in the courts and castles of this region, an elegant

society was formed, where women held the first rank, which attached great price to certain refinements of education called "courtoisie," and which allowed to fashionable love, that is, above all, gallantry between young men and married women, a considerable freedom, which the husbands themselves, engaged with other women than their wives, tolerated and even encouraged. One of the favourite amusements of these brilliant and futile reunions was what was called *jocs partitz*, in which a choice is made between two alternatives on a question of amorous casuistry, the one undertaking to maintain the opinion not selected by the other; judgment generally is submitted to an umpire. Soon the *jocs partitz* and simple *tençons* or debates took on a poetic form. Love songs, which all classes repeated, were raised to the rank of "courtois" songs, which from the beginning contained, as well as the formulæ already indicated, certain conventions, such as the humble and supplicating attitude of the lover towards his lady, the part, assuredly exaggerated, attributed to the slanderers which threaten the "fins amants," the application to love of the reasonings and subtleties of scholastics. All this poetry is eminently a society poetry: the poets seek above all the eulogies of the public they address and a celebrity which flatters their vanity if they happen to be great lords, which at the same time secures their daily bread if they are simple professional *trobadors*. The two classes appear about equal in numbers. In order to deserve these praises, it is necessary, first of all, to submit to the most precise technical rules, whose rigour increases with time, as regards rhyme, construction of strophes, and music, which was considered as an integral part of the *trobador's* art. These rules, at times artificial and puerile, had the advantage of revealing popular poetry to be a work of art, or of assuring it a prestige which caused the lyric production of the Limousin to be imitated all over France at first, and then throughout Europe. This production must already have been abundant and subject to fixed laws in the eleventh century, since we find in all the songs of the oldest lyric

poet of whom we possess anything, William IX., duke of Guyenne and count of Poitou (+1137), the use of the Limousin dialect, and in some of them the observance, either of the formulæ of "courtois" love, or of the rules of formal technique. Shortly afterwards, the Gascons Cercamon and Marcabrun, the Saintongean Geoffrei Rudel, Prince of Blaye (celebrated by the graceful legend attached to his name), composed pieces conforming altogether to the rules we may regard as classic, and not in the dialect of their respective lands, but in Limousin. It was, therefore, clearly in that province that the lyric "courtois" art arose, and it was constituted before the end of the eleventh century, although it has left us nothing more ancient (the first collections of poesies and of lives of troubadours were arranged towards the end of the twelfth century). It is true that with William IX. and Marcabrun we find many pieces which are more freely constructed, and which, above all, shake off altogether the shackles of "courtois" love, and even treat of other subjects than love; but this simply proves that the rules of Limousin art were not yet enforced with as much tyranny as afterwards. Besides, along with the *canso* (or *vers*) of the *tençon*, of the *joc partit* (or *partiment*), there subsisted some more independent forms, like the *sirventes* (French *serventois*) originally given over to the *sirvens* or servants, but generally designing a piece of political, satirical, or moral character, the *alba* and the *pastorela*, resembling their popular prototypes, etc. We will return in the following period to the immense development of the new art beyond its frontiers and the bordering lands where at present we find it restricted; we need only remark that, given the differentiation of dialects, the tongue it had adopted—and which the Gascon, Auvergnate, and even Poitevin poets had been able, without too much difficulty, to use in their songs—was most difficult for the northern French to understand, and in any case could not be used by them as a literary language, the more so, as when they became acquainted with the Limousin art and its productions,

they themselves had already developed in every sense a rich literature which also had the pretension of being "courtois" and artistic.

IV. From Louis VII. to Louis VIII. (1139–1226).

The most important fact of this period in political history was also of supreme consequence for the history of literature in the vulgar tongue: we refer to the marriage, in 1152, of Aliénor of Guyenne, the repudiated wife of Louis VII., with Henry Plantegenêt, who already possessed Anjou, Touraine, Maine, and Normandy, was later on suzerain of Brittany, and became king of England in 1154. Aliénor added to this vast domain Poitou and Guyenne, so that France—to which a large eastern stretch was still lacking and to which the south was but vaguely attached—was divided into two unequal halves, the largest of which was dependent on the Crown of England. The struggle, secret or declared, between Louis VII. and Philip II. on one side, Henry II., Richard, and John on the other, filled the entire period, and ended with the recovery of all the western provinces save Guyenne. Besides, as we have seen, England was Frenchified in all its superior culture; its kings were French in language and customs, and literary activity was almost equal in both the materially separated parts of the French world, except that at times on the Anglo-Aquitaine side it expressed sentiments hostile to purely French France. This latter, moreover, under Philip II. reached a high degree of power: the royal domain, beside the acquisitions gained from John Lackland, was enlarged on the north-eastern side by the annexion of Artois, and on the southern by the conquest of the greater part of Languedoc after the Albigenses Crusade. The battle of Bouvines had asserted the military force of the kingdom and developed national sentiment in all classes of the population. After the failure of the second, then of the third Crusade (which had nevertheless established a new

centre of French culture in Cyprus), French knights, with the Marquis of Montferrat and the Venetians, had overthrown the Greek Empire and established a Latin Empire at Constantinople. This century, fertile in vicissitudes and glory, was destined to see the most brilliant and varied activity of mediæval French literature.

If Aliénor and Henry's marriage came near, through the weakness of honest Louis VII., altering the course of French history, it exercised as great an influence, and a much more lasting one, upon the development of literature. Thanks to the first, then to the second marriage of the Duchess of Guyenne, the peculiar art which, from the Limousin, had rapidly spread over the south, penetrated northern France. She was the granddaughter of William IX., and had inherited both his loose temperament and poetic tastes. She diffused the doctrines of "courtois" love and the art which expressed them through the courts of France and England: in their turn, the two daughters she had by Louis VII., above all the Countess Marie of Champagne, cultivated them with ardour; the sons she had by Henry II., Henry "the young king," Geoffrey of Brittany, and Richard, loved and encouraged poetry, and served as intermediaries between that of the north and that of the south. Already under Henry I. the English court had been the home of elegance and poetry: this prince was no less a lover of brilliant diversions than a vigorous and political warrior; his wife, Queen Aélis was wont to preside over fashionable literary assemblies, and thither it seems came representatives of southern art like Marcabrun. Henry professed a lively interest in French poetry, and prided himself on his perfect knowledge of it. Meanwhile the kings of France appear to have remained rather indifferent to the movement which went on around them; nevertheless Queen Aélis of Champagne, wife of Louis VII., above all during her widowhood, held feasts where the best "courtois" poets expounded their new works; and the seigneurial courts, like those of Champagne, Blois, Flanders, and Hainault, even lesser ones like that of Guines, were centres of popular poetry, whether a national or a clerical

product. Thus this form of poetry expanded under all its forms, and radiated largely over the entire European world, and soon after rose French prose, with such a high destiny before it. The works of this time became later classics, and we begin to find in great abundance manuscripts, if not contemporary, at least reproducing these works nearly as they were written. Oral transmission continues steadily to lose its importance. For this very reason, authors, according to their talent and success, find their value increased ; the number of anonymous writings diminishes ; each one strives to attach his name to his work, and we assist at the dawn of the earliest literary reputations.

In such a wealthy production as that of the second half of the twelfth century and the first quarter of the thirteenth, it is impossible to mention, as we have tried to do in the preceding periods, nearly all the works which have reached us. We will limit ourselves to pointing out the most significant, and noting the general features of each kind. What characterises the entire period is the fact that literary art is more conscious of its aim and its effects, is lighter, more delicate, more learned, but much less spontaneous, less powerful, and less simple ; it is Gothic architecture, with its elegance, its slenderness, and its rich ornamentation, succeeding the grave and somewhat ponderous Romanesque.

The taste for *chansons de geste* was too rooted in the chivalrous and even in the burgess classes to disappear entirely before the new narrative poetry whose success we shall show later on. The jongleurs, on the contrary, were never more popular ; we find them at this period pullulating on all sides. But the old poems, a few of which may be traced back to the Merovingian times, and which for centuries went on being revived, needed still further alterations. These were made either by popular poets resembling those of the preceding ages, or by poets desirous of accomplishing a work of art, and to which work they have been careful to attach their names. To the assonance which, even when it persists, is less free, succeeds rhyme, already reigning paramount in poems written

in short couplets, and one of the most usual and regrettable tasks of the arrangers is the transposing into rhyme of ancient songs from assonance. By far the greater number of *chansons de geste* we possess date from this period, either as renovations or as original creations. Between them it is often difficult to distinguish. The poets strive to put some order in the chaos of epic production, and divide the *matière de France* into three "gestes," in which, however, they do not succeed in confining it entirely: the King's Geste, comprising poems of a properly national character; the Geste of Doon of Mayence, in which are principally classed poems of a feudal inspiration; the Geste of Garin of Monglane—supposed ancestor of William of Orange—in which are collected poems relating to the wars against the Saracens in the south. Many songs, especially the poems of the Crusades, which are now quite confounded with the real *chansons de geste*, remain without this summary classification, which, however, we will follow, for the sake of putting order into the roll.

In the King's Geste what we chiefly find are revivals: that of the *Roland* allows us to measure the distance which separates the poetry of the eleventh century and that of the end of the twelfth when the latter applies itself to the revival of the former; the conversion of assonances into rhyme enervates and dilutes the style, and the addition of futile and romantic episodes weakens the effect and destroys the unity of inspiration. Unfortunately we cannot always make comparisons; for example, we have only revivals of the song of the *Saisnes* (Saxons). One of them, it is true, is by a poet of talent, Jean Bodel of Arras; but he exercised his talent chiefly in introducing into the *matière de France* the spirit of artificial gallantry then in fashion; in other portions of the poem he displays invention and a style often energetic and picturesque. Of *Florent and Octavien* (which seems the remnant of a Merovingian poem originally dedicated to Charles Martel), of *Mainet*, of *Aspremont* and *Otinel* (Carolingian wars in Italy), we have but the forms of this period; that of the *King Louis* has reached us only in a summary. Then come the new creations,

some of which are more interesting. The author of *Berte aux grands pieds* (lost) associates an old mythical tale with Charlemagne's mother; that of *Sebile* (lost save a fragment and a Franco-Italian imitation) does the same for Charlemagne's wife; the author of *Gui of Burgundy* adds an episode of an amusing invention to the poems on the Spanish war; that of *Anséis of Carthage* completes them with a story in the beginning visibly borrowed from the Hispano-Arabic legend of Roderick and Count Julian; that of *Basin* (lost in French, known through allusions, and preserved in Dutch, German, and Norwegian) connects with Charlemagne a singular anecdote, which is told in many countries, of a sovereign who becomes for a night the companion of robbers; that of *Fierabras* develops the episode of an ancient poem which is lost, on an expedition in Italy, and in the first part writes some of the best epic *laisses* of the time (the combat of Olivier and Fierabras, where prowess and chivalrous courtesy are depicted in all their splendour); therefore the poem had a great success, and in the thirteenth century was done into the literary language of the south. *Aiquin* should also be pointed out, in which a French poet has worked in, connecting them with Charlemagne, some Breton traditions on the invasion, in the ninth century, of Brittany by the Danes (turned into Saracens, of course).

In the *Geste of Doon* we may point out first the revival, existing under various forms, of an old poem on the sons of Aimon, or *Renaud of Montauban:* the action, which took place under Charles Martel, is transported to Charlemagne's time; episodes of a wild grandeur and real pathos are maintained athwart all the transformations, and the almost superhuman character of the principal hero, the sorceries of Maugis, the feats of the marvellous steed Bayard, conferred on this poem a popularity not yet extinct. There are also great beauties in *Oger the Dane*, attributed to a Parisian jongleur called Raimbert. A Germanic tale about the elfin king Elberich, blent with a song on a Bordelais lord of the ninth century called Huon, and another on the involuntary

murder of a son of Charles the Bald, led to the charming poem of *Huon of Bordeaux*, a work quite new, and which breathes a marvellous atmosphere of fairyland, a gaiety absolutely French, light, a little swaggering, mixed with candour and heroism. To this poem the little king Oberon owes his eternal prestige. The poems on *Doon of Nanteuil*, *Aie of Avignon*, *Gui of Nanteuil*, *Doon of Mayence*, *Gaidon*, etc., are not lacking in interest, but are not very original. The song of *Girard of Roussillon* stands apart. We have seen that it comprised two elements, one belonging to the period of Charles Martel, and the other to that of Charles the Bald. In a French form, since lost, these two Charles were replaced by Charlemagne, and Girard was connected with the family of Doon of Nanteuil and Aimon. But in a poem composed probably towards 1160, the king who combats Girard is Charles Martel (although an arranger once names him Charles the Bald). This poem is itself only an arrangement of an old Burgundian song; it has preserved a striking archaism and a peculiar style which differs from that of the purely French songs; the lines are of ten syllables, rhymed, with the cesura after the sixth syllable. In the copies we possess an effort has been made to connect the language either with the French of the north or with the literary language of the south (which was easier), but a study of the rhymes convinces us that it was written in southern Poitou, very remote from the places where the events take place, and where they must first have inspired the epopee. It is the work of a clerk, who assigned a large place to the religious element, furnished by monastic legends, whose hero was the Girard of the ninth century, founder of an abbey; but this clerk had a fine epic feeling, and his work, difficult to understand, whimsical in composition and often in expression, is one of the most striking and most characteristic of the Middle Ages.

The Geste of Monglane was considerably enriched at this period by new and revived poems. The most important of all, *Aliscans*, is both one and the other; in its first part it presents us with the fusion (and the confusion) of very

diverse poems, and especially the continuation of a poem whose entirely southern hero was the young Vivian (in French called Vivien, and become William's nephew); in the second it introduces, like other poems of the times, a fantastical element into the matter of France with the giant Rainouart, a personage half formidable, half ludicrous, whose history, grown very popular, was continued in other poems. It contains, in the first part above all, admirable scenes, but along with these, and chiefly in the second part, many weaknesses and prolixities. The same poem which was continued in *Aliscans* is also continued in *Foucon of Caudie*, the work of a certain Herbert le Duc, who assures us positively that "he had it written out": this poem is nothing but a romance in the gallant and chivalrous kind, poor in invention and of a style which, sometimes brilliant, is in general both pretentious and dull; it had an immense success, and influenced all subsequent epic poetry. Episodes of the particular heroes of the Meridional Geste are sung in the *Enfances Guillaume*, the *Prise de Cordres*, the *Siège de Barbastre*, *Guibert d'Andrenas*, etc.; the origin of the Narbonnaise family is recounted in *Aimeri of Narbonne*, the *Narbonnais*, the *Death of Aimeri*, *Garin of Monglane;* a prolix and insipid continuation, which connects the geste to that of the Crusades, is given in *Renier*. Nearly all of these poems, some of which are of ancient origin, were composed in Picardy or in Artois. We must set apart *Aimeri of Narbonne*, the work of a clerk of Bar-sur-Aube, called Bertran (towards 1220), who displayed felicitous gifts of invention, composition, and expression. As a pendant to his *Aimeri of Narbonne*, he wrote *Girard of Vienne*, whose subject, in reality altogether foreign to the southern geste, he connected with it, and thereby gives fresh proof of his cleverness.

Outside the three gestes, the incredible epic fecundity of this period offers us yet numerous poems. One of them alone is an entire geste, quite an epopee. The *Lorrains* hymn the inexpiable *faide* which for generations, with the

hostility, the complicity, or the indifference of an impotent royalty (represented by Pepin), kept at war two feudal families, one Lorrain and the other Flemish and Bordelais (a singular and unexplained mixture). The very nucleus of this immense work, on which more than one author or reviser wrought (one alone is named, Jean de Flagy), seems pure invention, and still more probably are the "branches" which were added to the primitive trunk. But this invention is powerful and really epic; the *Lorrains* contain some of the most tragic and living scenes to be found in our ancient poetry, and it is here we seize the truest reflex and the most varied picture of feudal society, with its passions, its prejudices, its grandeurs, and its atrocities. Of the same class, but much feebler, is the long song of *Auberi the Burgundian*, which seems equally without historical basis. We mentioned above *Raoul of Cambrai*, both parts of which, one revived, the other invented with talent, are of this period. A legend both touching and barbarous, doubtless of Oriental origin (a father sacrifices his children that his friend, a leper, may be cured by bathing in their blood), and a Latin romance imitated from a Greek romance of the decadence (*Apollonius of Tyre*), largely supplied the same author, probably a jongleur, with material for two beautiful poems connected with the Carolingian cycle, *Ami and Amile* and *Jourdain of Blaie*. We have only the oldest part of *Aioul*, in decasyllabic lines with the cesura after the sixth syllable, worked into a continuation in Alexandrines, the whole in assonances, therefore still ancient; the poem, which is amusing, in the beginning is quite original.

The poems on the Crusades had made their way into the jongleurs' repertory, and assumed the character of veritable *chansons de geste*. Without mentioning the rehandling the early branches were submitted to, we must point out the poem dedicated to the youth of Godefroi de Bouillon (which indeed contains little truth), and two perfectly fabulous poems, one on the legend of the *Chevalier au Cygne*, an old mythic Rhenish tale which had become associated with the family of Bouillon; the other connected erroneously with this same

legend, the *Children changed into Swans* (a story of children bewitched by their step-mother and rescued by one of the victims), was a tale of mythic origin also hailing from the region of the Rhine. This latter has supplied the subject of different poems, one of which, *Eliouse*, is full of grace and engaging details.

A most interesting phenomenon happened in England at this epoch. A new nation had sprung from the rapidly-accomplished fusion of the Norman and Saxon races which regarded as its own all the traditions of its common land; poets, probably of English origin, put some of these traditions into the form of *chansons de geste*. Thus an early Saxon poem on *Horn and Rimenhild* was treated by a certain Thomas (who also wrote a poem, lost, on Horn's father); here we have all the manner of the Germanic epopee and a distinct poetry with a savour utterly unFrench. The same may probably be said of *Bovon of Hampton*, though the English origin of this song is not quite so certain; in any case it had an Anglo-Norman form at a very early date, and appeared only later in the continental versions.

In spite of its wealth and its success, the epic production in the form of *chansons de geste* is not the most important or most characteristic of this period in the matter of narrative poetry; it only continues, in fact, though with modifications of grounds and form, the activity of the preceding ages. On the contrary, what claims our attention in this age, without speaking of *fabliaux* and pious legends, are the three new forms of narratives in verse: the romances imitated from antiquity, the Breton romances, and the romances of adventure. We will begin with the first, which are the earliest we have, and which appear to have influenced the others.

The first romance of this kind in date seems to have been written towards 1150 at latest, in the south-west of Touraine or the north-west of Poitou. If in the preceding epoch, Alberic, wanting to tell the marvellous tale of Alexander to his contemporaries, found nothing to suit him but the form of the *chanson de geste*, the author of the romance of *Thebes* adopted

quite another, that of octosyllabic couplets, which at once changed the entire character and tone of the narrative. Had he any models? Without mentioning didactic works, we know of none other anterior to his poem but the lives of the saints. At least in profane narrative poetry he is the first to employ this form, and thereby already gains a real importance in literary history: this importance becomes much greater if we consider that he created the type of "antique" romance which his successors reproduced. His source seems to have been an abridgment in Latin prose, which condensed, notably from Statius, the legend of Œdipus and the war of Eteocles and Polynice: the subject, with its extraordinary adventures, its tales of battle, and the account of the long siege of Thebes, was calculated to please the Middle Ages. Our author has treated it very freely: he has greatly attenuated, if not effaced, the mythological element; he has plentifully strewn anachronisms and introduced episodes of his own invention of quite a feudal character, detailed descriptions borrowed from the most sumptuous life of his times, and greatly surpassing reality; finally and principally he has developed love episodes hardly indicated, and given a much more important *rôle* to women. All this will be found in his imitators, and will become an integral part of the mediæval romance. Unfortunately we do not know the name of this innovator: doubtless he placed it at the head of his poem, of which he was mighty proud, for in the verses which now form the beginning he proclaims (which has also become a current formula) that the man who has *sen* (sense) should not keep it hidden if he wishes his name to survive him, and he invokes the example of Homer, Plato, Virgil, and Cicero, who would be unknown if they had *celé leur sapience*. But if his work had a great success, proved by the repeated rehandlings it underwent, nevertheless the copyists, as too often happened, suppressed the name he was so anxious to illustrate.

We are also unacquainted with the name of the author of *Enéas*, written in the Isle of France towards 1155, where, something in the manner of *Thebes*, descriptions, tales of

battles, but above all love scenes, with subtle monologues and dialogues in the "courtois" style (although mixed with singular coarsenesses), are still more freely indulged in. But the author of the romance of *Troie* has so dexterously enshrined his in verse that he has transmitted it to posterity. He was a clerk, native of Sainte-More near Tours, and called Benoit; his work, dedicated to Queen Aliénor and composed towards 1165, is the ultimate development of the kind inaugurated by the romance of *Thebes*. It contains no less than 30,000 lines, quite a mediæval expansion of a little Latin book belonging to the last centuries of the Empire, where an imaginary Trojan, called Dares, was supposed to give, in antithesis to the fables of Homer, an authentic account of the famous siege (completed by the no less authentic diary of a Greek called Dictys). Out of these dry and lifeless texts, Benoit fashioned a vast romance, enlivened with episodes of all kinds, one of which, treating of the loves of the volatile Briseis, with the Trojan Troilus and the Greek Diomedes, was destined to be revived by Boccaccio, Chaucer, and Shakespeare. Alongside of tiresome prolixities, Benoit's work contains passages revealing the true poet, and holds a most important place in European literature. It was translated into every language, even into Latin (by the Sicilian Guido Colonna, in the thirteenth century), and, for the Middle Ages, replaced the *Iliad*. It was in these romances, relying upon works of antiquity, that a narrative poetry in the new taste was first created, and addressed to the classes which sought to improve and refine themselves, particularly to women. They were made to be read, and no longer to be sung. They had certainly a decisive influence on the form taken by recitals in verse of quite a different origin, especially the Breton romances, and the romances of adventure, which we find pullulating on all sides shortly after the apparition of the first *antique* romances.

The tales of Breton origin (insular or continental, little matters) were for long, we have seen, in France and England, the subject of the recitals of the jongleurs, and along with the *lais* enjoyed great popularity. But we do not possess any

poetic versions anterior to those of Chrétien of Troyes, whose talent and success probably consigned to oblivion the attempts of his predecessors. This latter, who was at least partly educated as a clerk, began his poetical career towards 1160 by the translation of Ovid's various "metamorphoses" and *Art of Love;* he then wrote a (probably short and episodic) poem on Tristan, unfortunately lost; then successively (without speaking of *Cliègès*, which is rather a romance of adventure) four "Arthurian" romances: *Erec*, *Lancelot* (which he left for another to finish), *Ivain*, and *Perceval;* death overtaking him towards 1180 prevented him from finishing the last-named; *Ivain* and *Lancelot* are of 1172 or thereabouts. Chrétien transformed the "matter of Brittany" in casting it altogether into a French form; he left out all the national and bellicose element which made it originally an epopee; he only concerned himself with the episodes and with the adventures of certain personages. The court where Arthur thrones at his "Round Table," without taking much part in the action, is but the starting-point and goal of the narrative, and above all serves as a motive for descriptions of feasts and tourneys. Love in various forms fills the greater part of his romances. In *Erec* and *Ivain* he deals with conjugal love disturbed by caprice or misunderstanding, now on the husband's side, now on the wife's; *Lancelot*, written under the inspiration of Marie of Champagne, daughter of Aliénor, is the airing of the most refined theories of "courtois" love which as elaborated by the troubadour and codified later by the chaplain André in Latin, chiefly from the tradition of the court of Champagne. To this sentimental element—developed, as in the "antique" romances, in monologues, dialogues, and commentaries, stamped with all the dialectic subtlety then in fashion—the poet unites, not without incongruity, the marvellous element which springs from the Celtic tales: enchanted gardens circled with invisible walls, fountains whose disturbed water causes storms, bridges formed of the blade of a sword, fairies, dwarfs, giants, monsters and wonders of all kinds; thence also the search, unknown in our old epopee,

of adventure for adventure's sake, knight-errantry, with its bravado, its combats without reason, its strange "customs," all life destitute of reality but captivating to the imagination. The poet and his audience see in all this only a subject of amusement, and just as they do not understand the true national epopee in the tales of Brittany, which they judge "futile and agreeable," so they fail to conjecture in them the remnant of an ancient mythology. The last novel of Chrétien, *Perceval*, gives a restricted place to love; the poet, who spread out his material by adding a string of adventures of Gauvain to the story of his hero, wished to write a "biographical" romance (an English poem of the thirteenth century helps us to recover it in a clearer form), where a child, brought up in the woods by the widow of a father killed treacherously, reaches the perfection of chivalry, avenges his father, marries a young girl of high rank, and becomes possessed of a talisman which confers happiness; in the Breton tale this talisman was a *graal*, that is, a dish, which provided an exquisite food, and had doubtless other virtues we should have learnt of had Chrétien finished his work. It had numerous continuators in France and Germany (Wolfram d'Eschenbach), who gave a mystic signification to the *graal* (Chrétien had already pointed out its religious character), and thus created the immense and mysterious cycle of the "Holy Graal." Amongst them figures in the first rank a knight of the Franche-Comté called Robert of Boron, who wrote three poems, *Joseph*, *Merlin*, and *Perceval*. The second was an arrangement of the story of Merlin in Gaufrei of Monmouth; the first was a fiction destined to associate the Graal with the Last Supper and the Passion of Christ; the third was quite a new story (though taken in part from Chrétien's work), of the way Perceval became master of the Graal; Robert joins to it the history of Arthur's death, borrowed from Gaufrei, and the end of the Table Round. Robert does not continue the unfinished work of Chrétien: he writes a parallel work (he even expressly contradicts it), for which he utilised other sources. On the contrary, the

unfinished *Perceval* found many continuators, one of which, Gaucher of Dourdan, stopped half-way, two of which, Girbert of Montreuil and Manessier of Lille, terminated the work each one to his fancy without knowing each other, and almost simultaneously (towards 1225). We will speak elsewhere of the prose romances.

Chrétien's great merit lay in his form: never before was the language handled with such ease and facile grace. His writings excited universal admiration, and for long was he held to be the master of the "bel françois." His very defects, his affectation, his uniform proceeding and tricks, his subtleties were imitated. It was partly under the impulsion he had given that numerous rhymers, at the end of the twelfth and beginning of the thirteenth century, set themselves to exploit the "matter of Brittany." Some of them—the most celebrated a woman born in France but living in England, Marie—limit themselves to a brief account of the subject of the Breton or English *lais*. The greater part compose real poems, dedicated either to the episodes of the life of a hero (nearly always Gauvain), or to the biography of some less well-known hero. They draw from the oral and written repertory of the story-tellers, because at this epoch all direct tie was broken between Celtic tradition and the French literary purveyors. No doubt can be held that many of these romances have no other source, either in entirety or in part, than the author's invention. Chrétien gave the example by amplifying, with the aid of episodes drawn from his imagination, the traditional themes with which his framework to his principal subject furnished him.

The authors of some of these romances have transmitted us their names; viz., *Raoul of Houdan* (Île de France), whom his contemporaries regarded almost as Chrétien's equal, who, as a matter of fact, took his inspiration from him, but who, above all in his *Méraugis*, reveals, alongside of real qualities, shocking defects;—William the clerk, author of *Fergus*, remarkable for its dedication to the chief of a Scottish clan, proving how far the taste for French literature had penetrated;

—Renaud of Beaujeu, a knight and not a "professional," who, to please his lady, treats of a chivalrous and marvellous subject with a most delightful ease: his *Bel Inconnu* is one of the pleasantest works this period has left us.

Amongst the anonymous romances, more than one deserves attention, like *Ider*, written probably in Anjou; *Durmart*, a long composition from which its author endeavoured to exclude the marvellous element, if not the improbable (the subject is the passionate love of the hero for a queen he has never seen); *Gliglois*, a charming story of pure invention, which is only connected by its frame with the Breton romances, and which recalls the *Bel Inconnu*; *Jaufré*, a work equally without root in tradition, but on the contrary full of enchantments and wonders, remarkable because it was written in the *langue d'oc* at the court of a king of Arragon, and because the author even transports into the south of France the court of King Arthur and the scenes of his history.

We must give a separate place to the stories relating to Tristan, which have certainly a Celtic origin, but have only been connected artificially and of late with the Arthurian cycle. Introduced at an early hour into English poetry, they reached the French poets by a double or triple road, and they were very anciently the object of *lais* and numberless stories. The earliest poems by which they became known to the French public are unfortunately lost. We have at least a portion of that of an Anglo-Norman called Thomas, who wrote towards 1160. Thomas is a poet of great talent, who employs the customary methods of the French romances (he is especially strong in subtleties and dialectics), but who possesses a gift of emotion and often a poetry of expression wherein we feel the influence of another race and a deeper sensibility. A fragment, having neither beginning nor end, relates, in an almost popular style, with many differences when compared with Thomas' unified poem, part of the loves of Tristan and Iseut; we can almost recognise two passages from distinct works, the first of which, containing the name of a certain Béroul, seems earlier than the second, anonymous

and belonging to the end of the twelfth century. There are also detached *lais* about episodes of these loves. Everything touching this subject has a peculiar character of passion and poetry, something both barbarous and profoundly human, which is still felt centuries later, athwart the alterations of the narrative and the blunders of the greater part of the narrators. This tale of fatal and culpable love, born in the Celtic soul, eagerly accepted by the French society of the twelfth century, has not lost its troublous and pathetic charm, and will ever keep its place among the really representative themes which form part of the poetic patrimony of humanity.

A fact of the greatest literary importance is connected with the fashion of the Breton romance so widely spread at this epoch. To it we owe the first romance in prose (*Aucassin and Nicolette*, to which we will return, is independent of this movement). These romances were, no doubt, modelled on prose translations of Latin works of an historical character, like the *Book of Kings* and the *Macchabées*, or the Chronicle of Turpin (of which more anon), and books like those of Villehardouin. They do not seem to be connected with the stories which the "conteurs" recited of Breton subjects, chiefly before Chrétien of Troyes, for there is nothing popular about them: they are the work of clerks, who strove with effort and more or less success to write with art, and whose success was greatly due to the extreme importance they attached to style. Brunet Latin, in his *Rhétorique* imitated from Cicero, introduced as a model of description the portrait of Iseut in the prose *Tristan*, and when Dante attributed to the French tongue the merit of having produced *quidquid vulgare prosaicum*, and above all *pulcherrimas regis Arturi ambages*, it was chiefly this art of writing in "vulgar" prose that he admired, and which he strove to imitate in the *Convito* and the *Vita Nuova*. Unfortunately these works, of so much importance, have scarcely reached us in their original form: in the succeeding epoch they were amplified and retouched in such a way as to alter considerably their primitive character;

there are some we only know by foreign imitations, others of which we possess only the name. The earliest, and certainly the most remarkable, seems to be *Lancelot*, which was written towards 1210, in part from anterior poems, but principally with the aid of the author's invention, who wished to trace a finished picture of "courtois" love between the model of knights and the model of ladies. *Tristan*, which has only reached us in rehandlings still remoter from the original than those of *Lancelot*, is a kind of pendant to it, in which the fiery and simple love of the old tale bends to all the rules of fashionable convention. These are followed by a group of romances about Merlin which appear to be connected with the prose rendering of Robert of Boron's poem. The *Quest of the Holy Graal* is quite distinct, a cold but original work of an author more mystical than romantic; here the taking possession of the Holy Graal is no longer attributed to Perceval, but to Galaad, Lancelot's son. In the *Great Saint Graal* a whole anterior history is allotted to this *Graal*, become the centre of a special cycle —with which is connected a long and confused romance wherein Perceval is called *Perlesvaus*. The whole cycle finally ends with the immense romance of *Palamède*, whose author, in order to freshen up an exhausted material, pretends to relate the history of the generation preceding Arthur's. We find in all these romances a confusion of adventures, for the most part as uninteresting as improbable; but there are some really delightful, and the courteous and chivalrous spirit they breathe gives them a charm which is most felt in Malory's English compilation, of much later date, where they are nearly all collected, and, with advantage, are greatly abridged. The manuscripts give information, which seems all false, the meaning of which we cannot clearly gather, about the authors of these strange works, whose success was considerable: many were said to be by Robert of Boron, who certainly only wrote in verse, others by Hélie of Boron, an imaginary cousin of Robert, others by Gautier Map, a celebrated Latinist, or by a certain knight called Luce of the

Gast. All these authors were said to be English and to have written for a King Henry, while it is clear that the romances were composed in France. On this subject there still remain many obscurities, which we shall never, perhaps, be able to clear away altogether.

Along with the "courtois" romances, and almost at the earliest of Chrétien of Troyes, appear the first romances so called of "adventure," which may be interpreted in saying that these romances, like the Greek romances that inspired many of them, treated of the vicissitudes of destiny and the hindrances flung by fortune into human lives: as in the Greek romances, and in all the romances almost up to our age, the *dénouement* is always happy; the vicissitudes of the narrative nearly always turn on the obstacles of all kinds which retard the union of two lovers. This sort of tale seems to have sprung from Eastern imagination: it was thence it passed on to the Greek romancers. They gave these tales a pedantic and conventional form, but they lived in oral tradition and penetrated into the Greco-Roman world, where mythology often supplied almost analogous stories. Now, in the mediæval world the Germanic epopee had created more than one theme corresponding to these Greek romances, and the Celtic *lais* also briefly related many an adventure of the same order. It is impossible in most cases to indicate the precise sources from which drew our French romancers of the twelfth century; we meet with the subjects of their works nearly everywhere, above all in that East which forever remains the great originary reservoir, and there is often reason to admit a Byzantine intermediary; as for real invention, as far as the basis of the recital is concerned, it is extremely rare, and what it produces is generally of signal feebleness. It is not always easy to trace a line of demarcation between these romances and the Breton romances: some even (*Cligès*, *Floriant and Florette*) are superficially connected with the Arthurian world, and we have classed in the Arthurian cycle poems (*Durmart*, *Gliglois*) which, save in name, are nothing but romances of adventure. There is, however, for the greater

part, this distinctive feature, that everything is subordinated to what constitutes the very object of the narrative, the birth and development of the inclination of the two lovers, the obstacles that separate them, and their final reunion; *adventure* in the sense of the Breton romance, that is the accomplishment of a difficult feat, here rarely plays a part, and knight-errantry is equally absent. Both in subject and in execution the romances of adventure are the real precursors of the modern novel. They are concerned in general, like the "antique" romances and the Breton romances, with the portrayal of the society in which their personages move, painting it always from the contemporary society of the authors. It varies, nevertheless, greatly in time and space, although we remark a certain tendency to place the principal or accessory link of the plot in Italy, whence possibly the French story-tellers had derived a considerable portion of what might be called the "matter of the East."

It is probable that the first romances of this sort were written under the influence of the "antique" romances, whose methods they largely reproduced. The author of *Floire and Blanchefleur* pretends to have heard the tale from a lady to whom a clerk had related it from a Latin book. This is one of the earliest and most charming romances we have; it is of Oriental origin, and probably reached us through the intermediary of the Moors in Spain. It relates the story of two "children" who love one another, are separated because of an inequality of condition, and meet again to fall into an immense peril of death from which they are rescued thanks to the very charm exercised by their candid and passionate love; many of the episodes reveal an exquisite grace. Not less pleasing, and a work of more conscious art, is the *Parthénopeu of Blois*, whose author, by his hero's very name (taken from the romance of *Thèbes*), indicates its dependence on the "antique" romance; it is a pendant of the story of *Psyche*, which is to be found in many a popular tale, where the sexes are interverted. The Anglo-Norman Huon of Rotelande also borrows from *Thèbes* the names

Ipomédon and *Protésilaus*, the heroes of both these poems, in which there is more invention than tradition, and the first of which, witty and peculiar, is infinitely superior to the second. Other romances develop Breton *lais*, like the *Ille and Galeron* of Gautier of Arras, a contemporary and very inferior rival of Chrétien of Troyes; this is a tiresome work, quite destitute of charm; *Galeran of Brittany*, by Renaud, a delicate poem, the nearest approach to contemporary reality, which may be called the *Paul and Virginia* of the Middle Ages; and doubtless at least a part of *William of Palerne*, the *Escoufle*, *Amadas*. The same theme which Shakespeare treated in *Cymbeline* is the subject of three poems, the *Count of Poitiers*, *William of Dôle*, and the *Violette* of Girbert of Montreuil. The first, archaic and quaint, appears to be the work of a jongleur; the second is interesting by reason of its pictures of social life and of the author's talent; we owe him the original idea, since imitated (and already in his own time by Girbert of Montreuil) of inserting in his poem all kinds of songs then in fashion; the third is an imitation of the first, influenced by the second. We must admit the Oriental or Byzantine sources of the *Éracle* of Gautier of Arras, the *Athis and Porphirias* of Alexander (no doubt Alexander of Bernai), the *Emperor Constant*, and mention separately the *Florimont* of the Lyonnese Aimon of Varenne, who wrote it in 1188, in "the tongue of the French," become the literary language of at least a great part of France, after a legend he had learnt in Greece itself. Other romances, like *Waldef*, *Havelok*, *Guy of Warwick*, are borrowed from English traditions by Anglo-Norman writers. Others are of pure invention, but contain many reminiscences, like the dull *Blancandin* and the amusing *Joufroi*, a rather licentious little tale, which apparently preserves the memory of the amorous adventures of William of Poitiers. Thus on all sides the need of telling and listening to stories provoked a search for working materials, and narratives from all sources were perceptibly moulded to a like form in the hands of the French poets,

who usually, when once adapted and put into shape, passed them on to the poets of other lands.

This taste for stories was, we have seen, not only gratified by the reading, generally aloud, of works really literary, but by the recitals of professional story-tellers, who, even if they did not write out their tales, were obliged to give them a definite form. To our regret, we are not acquainted with these narratives, for, judging by the single specimen that remains of a kindred class, such prose tales, livelier, more natural, more closely rendering the familiar speech, would have an immense charm for us. We refer to the "chantefable" of *Aucassin and Nicolette*, which, as the name tells it, alternates passages in verse with passages in prose. These passages in verse are *laisses* of assonant lines (lines of seven syllables, a thing unique), which proves the ancientness of the work. They are graceful, but the prose passages captivate us most and reveal more of the true poet. It is in reading them that we understand why the French of the Middle Ages seemed so "délitable" to foreigners: impossible to imagine a language at once more precise and more expressive, more simple and more supple. It is handled by an artist who knows the value of words and the rhythm of phrases, and who joins the candour of a child's soul to a certain malicious irony, and who besides has a very lively sense of the picturesque and the plastic. The basis of the story is the same as that of *Floire and Blanchefleur;* but the story had been considerably transformed in passing from mouth to mouth. It is not, however, the adventures which interest the story-teller: it is the sentiments of his personages and their manner of expressing them; two-thirds of his work is in dialogues, and these dialogues are of an incomparable surety, animation and vividness. Life he regards as well with a free and hardy glance: he dares to introduce into his work a tough peasant, the reality of whose miseries contrasts with the sentimental sufferings of Aucassin, and he makes his young hero speak of heaven and hell with an irreverence the expression of which we are astonished to find transmitted to us. This work, both delicate and simple, naïve

and affected, recalls the most daintily-wrought mediæval ivories bequeathed to us by an art comparable with the author's; with the *Song of Roland*, of quite a different kind, it is without doubt what posterity will preserve as most representative of French poetry in the Middle Ages.

Along with the romances of adventure, which generally are of a biographical character and admit of several thousands of lines, rank the simple tales or *fableaux*, like them of diverse and often very remote origin, but much shorter, limited to an isolated adventure, and usually of a purely humorous character. The transition is even made by romances in which a principal tale serves as a frame for intercalated stories, or else where a series of stories is connected with the same personage. To the first class belong the versions of a book originally Indian, where a stepmother unjustly accuses her stepson, and he only escapes death thanks to tales which wise counsellors relate to the king, his father, warning him against the perversity of women; tales in the opposite sense told by the stepmother were early added. By way, no doubt, of Byzantium or Italy, though this we cannot exactly determine, the tale reached France, and was put into verse towards the middle of the twelfth century (later it was written in prose from a somewhat different version). From another source, but greatly altered, it came to the knowledge, at the end of the twelfth century, of a Lorrain monk, John of Haute-Seille, who put it into Latin, and made Virgil (round whose name a whole legend had been formed) the master of the young prince (son of the king of Sicily, Dolopathos) and the sole narrator of the tales; his romance was shortly afterwards put into good French verse by a poet called Herbert. In these peregrinations of the story the greater part of the tales were lost and were replaced by others. The unfinished romance of *Trubert*, by a certain Douin, offers us a series of atrocious jokes played on a duke by a villain whose character, eminently popular, is a mixture of silliness and cunning. This kind of epopee of the vengeance of the lowly upon the great reminds us of certain Spanish picaresca novels; it is both cynical and

ferocious; it is besides, in the greater part of its features, of Oriental origin, and recurs in the folklore of different races with an ever-renewed success.

To the East also, or at least to general folklore, belong the greater number of our *fableaux*, especially those which recount, usually with sympathy rather than with blame, the arts by which wives take in their credulous husbands. It would be too long to enumerate them here; we will only mention *Auberée*, which, by the wit of its detail, the subtlety of observation, and a certain reserve in the matter of expression, is the masterpiece of its kind. We possess the Indian form of this tale, and it is delightful to see how, in the skilful hand of an anonymous poet, it has taken completely the physiognomy of the French society, burgess and Christian, to which it was transported. As a matter of fact, the greater part of these tales pass in middle-class society between knights, clerks, and burgesses, and even when they have slight merit of form, they have always that of making us acquainted with the life of the age in many familiar details.

This merit belongs still more to the tales, and they are pretty numerous, which seem to have sprung from the mediæval world itself. Some are merely anecdotes, coarse and even disgusting—nearly all this literature is trivial and often obscene—but there are others which are gay or pathetic narratives of slight invention, yet whose very existence is interesting. We must put apart the poem of *Richeut*, which is not a real *fableau:* it is a picture, traced with a great surety of touch and a surprising realism, of the life of a courtesan of the twelfth century. The beginning shows us that Richeut's life had already been the occasion of poems. Now the poem we have about her is dated 1159, which helps us to conjecture all the poetry of the preceding age we have lost. Her son Samson forms the pendant of Richeut: he is the type of the vile speculator in women, as she is the type of the vile speculator in men; these two personages, worthy of each other, are at war when the poem is interrupted in the sole manuscript, and we do not know if Samson was revenged

on Richeut for the advantage she gained over her son without his knowing it was she. We regret it, in spite of the crudity of the colours the poet has used in this singular "genre" picture, because it is living and instructive. We are surprised to find such customs in the time of Suger, and above all such a free and objective portrayal of them. *Richeut* reminds us of the most realistic novels of our own days, in which such masculine and feminine types are described with relish, and we cannot refuse to recognise that this is a vein very French indeed, and altogether very different from what is called "l'esprit gaulois," which reigns in many *fableaux*.

The fables properly called, of the Middle Ages, have no literary value; they are but translations, generally mediocre, of Latin fables. The collection of Marie of France, composed towards 1180, is interesting, in that it is made from an English collection, where along with the ordinary prose versions of the Phedrian fables were admitted tales and apologues of diverse origin, principally Oriental.

But as regards tales of animals, the original work of the Middle Ages is the *Romance of Renard*. We have seen that as early as the preceding age there must have existed French poems relating the episodes of this amusing animal epopee, whose earliest sources should be sought in folklore, perhaps chiefly in German folklore. We are not quite certain when and where the two principal actors of these tales —met with amongst many races without this peculiarity— were endowed with a more marked individuality, received human names, Isengrin the wolf and Renard the fox, and were presented as two gossips, or as uncle and nephew, the weaker and more cunning of which plays on the other, voracious and credulous, tricks incessantly renewed. This invention created the entire cycle of Renard, which, in France at least, does not seem to have been concentrated in a single poem, and is only known to us in the state of "branches," that is to say, of detached episodes, with a common basis vaguely supposed to be known, which are sometimes connected but often

contradict each other. At an early hour the clerks took a considerable part in the elaboration of this cycle: they annexed to the primitive basis narratives drawn from antique fables, and introduced chiefly into the cycle the character of the lion, who received the name of *Noble*, and held his court, surrounded by his vassals, like the king of a song of geste. This altered the entire physiognomy of the cycle, transformed the animals, at first near enough to nature, into feudal barons, and at the end of the evolution, concluded by turning the "Romance of Renard" into a rather tiresome parody of the epopee. But at the epoch we are considering, the diverse elements of the cycle are still balanced evenly, and mingle in most felicitous combinations. The branch dedicated to the Judgment of Renard, in which Noble, holding his court, listens to the complaints made by many of his subjects against the audacious scorner of all laws, summons him thrice in vain to come and respond, then, when at last he presents himself, condemns him to a punishment the latter is able to avoid, is quite French in invention and arrangement, and is the masterpiece of the kind. It has supplied the groundwork of the Dutch poem of the thirteenth century, which, from transformation to transformation, ended in the *Reineke Fuchs* of Goethe. Other branches, composed at the same period, have preserved all the gaiety, the inoffensive malice, and the naturalness of the old tales; but already in many of those which the clerks have handled, we detect the heavy parody of human society, and a tendency to direct satire, which was not in the spirit of the old "gabets" on Isengrin and his gossip.

Such was the production of France as regards narrative poetry, under its various forms, from the middle of the twelfth century to the end of the first quarter of the thirteenth. On viewing it as a whole, we are astounded by its fecundity and its variety. While the ancient national epopee still continues, is constantly carried from one end of the country to the other on the *vielles* of the jongleurs, arranges and incessantly revives its early repertory, the antique poems,

the matter of Brittany, the Eastern fictions, comic and pathetic folklore, the tales of animals, are eagerly welcomed by our poets: they cast them on all sides into moulds which give them a form marked with the stamp of the country, the time, and the society into which they penetrate. This form is nearly always that of the poem in lines of eight syllables rhyming two by two, but—without speaking of the "chante-fable" which has reached us—we find towards the end of the period an altogether new phenomenon: the romance in prose, which for long the greater part of the foreign nations did not dare to imitate. Already the romance in short verse was destined to be read, and no longer sung; with more reason still the romance in prose, and this reading aloud is no longer the affair of the clerk. The romances themselves, faithful pictures of the customs of their time, often show us women, more rarely men, occupied in reading a "romance," and many a couple perhaps before Francesca and Paolo was moved by the reading of the scene of *Lancelot* in which Galehaut arranges a secret meeting between his friend and Queen Guenièvre.

This famous passage of Dante is a testimony, relatively recent, of the influence exercised on neighbouring literatures by the prodigious fecundity of our own. All more or less awake, so to say, at its voice; all borrow from it, in the spirit of emulation, either directly by translations or by indirect imitations, a great number of its productions (with the modifications imposed by their respective traditions); all are influenced more or less by its spirit, that "courtois" spirit which reigned over French culture, and which other lands sought to assimilate. Italy was acquainted at an early hour with our songs of geste, thither transported by the jongleurs; in the north, above all in the provinces neighbouring Venice, native jongleurs were formed, who at first lightly accommodated the French they sang to the local idiom, then composed poems themselves on the "royaux de France" in a mixed but increasingly Italianised language, and thus gave the start to that strange Italian epic creation which was to end in Pulci,

Bojardo, and Ariosto. Under another form, it welcomed the antique narratives, adapted by the French and rendered assimilable to the men of the Middle Ages. They also read the Breton romances, especially in prose, and, although less abundantly, the romances of adventure and the *fableaux*, many of which, no doubt, had already passed, oftenest in the state of simple oral tradition, through Italy in their voyage from east to west. It had accepted the "branches" of *Renard* at an epoch anterior, it seems, to the earliest version of the story known in France.—Spain, comprising Portugal, was for long too much absorbed in the incessant wars with the Moors to find the needful leisure for the ripening of what may be properly called literature; but it had adopted our bellicose songs of geste with enthusiasm, and they brought forth its *cantares de gesta*, soon emancipated and become powerfully national. The fine prose literature which, under the impulsion of Alphonsus X., Spain produced in the thirteenth century, was perhaps also provoked in the origin by our romances and our tales; later on it specially adopted the Breton romances, which were destined in a final transformation to produce the *Amadis*, which in turn was to act so potently upon French and other literatures.—England was, at least superficially, quite French; but already English literature was beginning to spring up, and it was after translations from the French that it attempted to fly with its own wings; in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries a number of our songs of geste, our Breton romances, our romances of adventure, our *fableaux*, our tales of Renard were put into English; and if Chaucer was indeed something other than "a great translator," he none the less also greatly translated from the French.—But it is principally in the Germanic lands that the influence of the France of this period was preponderant, in spite of the existence of an epopee which, tracing backward to remote epochs, never ceased to be renewed. As early as the preceding period, the *Roland* and *Alexander* of Alberic had been put into German verse by two clerks nearly at the same time (1130–1136). Later numerous

songs of geste were translated either into Dutch or into High or Low German (the most celebrated is the rather free imitation of the *Aliscans*, made by Wolfram of Eschenbach under the title of *Willehalm*). But the "courtois" romances had a much greater influence. The translation of the *Eneas* by Henry of Veldeke into a Dutch dialect, towards 1170, was translated itself almost immediately afterwards into High German, and in subject, form, and spirit, gave the signal of a movement which was to fill more than a century: antique romances, Breton romances, romances of adventure, *fableaux*, *Renard*, were all translated with more or less freedom, and with a freedom more or less felicitous according to the talent and the personality of the poet. The Germans call this epoch the first classic age of their literature, and it is so chiefly by the real excellence of form of a few poets; as for the basis, it is almost wholly borrowed, with the exception of a few poems which survived from the early epopee, and which then took on their definite form, greatly influenced by the "courtois" poetry.—Even Norway, scarce converted to Christianism, accepted our creations or our adaptations, but it gave up trying to imitate the form however faintly, and translated into prose, not without abridgments, the *Roland* and other songs (many of which are thus only preserved), and the *lais of Brittany*, and *Tristan* and *Parthénopeu*, and others still. And so French literature of the twelfth century was spread over Europe, though France, it seems, indifferent to the foreigner, knew nothing whatever of this prodigious success. That is why the history of this literature is the centre and often the starting-point of all others, why foreigners are often more interested in it than we are, and why the French Middle Ages—but above all the twelfth century—constitute for Europe a sort of second antiquity.

The works of poetic fiction that appeared then in such a great number, and exercised such influence abroad, were not the only narratives produced in the epoch we are engaged upon. Then sprang up also the first historic works that we possess in the vulgar tongue. The historical poems of Wace, of

Geoffrei Gaimar, of Benoit of Sainte-More are only impoverished translations from the Latin, whose additions (except Wace's at times) are only valueless ornaments; but there are more original works. The first historic work relating to contemporary facts—for it is certainly such under a hagiographical form—which we have in French is the *Life of Thomas Becket* by Garnier of Pont Sainte-Maxence; it is at the same time one of the most remarkable of the Middle Ages. Garnier was a clerk, French by birth, language, and heart, but above and beyond all devoted to the cause of the Church, which he understood in the same uncompromising spirit as his hero. It was in France he composed, after the murder of Thomas (Dec. 29, 1170), a poem which, in later years, after a journey to England, where he collected precious documents, he completely wrought into the work we now possess. This work is a historic source of great value, but it is not less precious from a literary point of view. Garnier writes a firm, supple, energetic, and often coloured or pathetic language; he handles Alexandrine verse with a perfect ease, without vain effort, uniting the lines five by five in rhymed strophes; he knows how to express in French grave thoughts and abstract ideas for which it was regarded as scarcely fit. The poem of Jordan Fantosme on the war between Henry II. and William, king of Scotland (1173–74), almost contemporaneous with that of Garnier, makes a singular contrast with it. Written by a learned clerk even celebrated in the School, eye-witness of the events, it has the form and manner of a song of geste, and if it were not for the author's express claim we might, without hesitation, attribute it to a jongleur. Ambroise, to whom we owe the recital of Richard Cœur de Lion's crusade (1190–92), was very probably a jongleur from the neighbourhood of Evreux; but he uses the ordinary form of chronicles in verse, and sets himself to relate all he has seen with candour; he allots their naïve and sincere expression to the sentiments of the poor "pilgrims" who, gone to conquer Jerusalem, experienced the cruel deception of only being admitted there for a moment, in trembling,

under the contemptuous and insecure watch of the Muslim. This Anglo-French historiography ends by a biography very different from that of Thomas Becket, but as interesting from other points of view. It is that of an English nobleman, William the Marshal, earl of Pembroke, written shortly after his death (1219), for his children, by a professional poet, who was a native of Southern Normandy, but was attached to the service of an English lord, called John of Early. This poet has chiefly drawn upon oral sources, and in many places has been able to render the physiognomy of men and things, now gay, now touching and solemn, in a singularly lively and striking fashion; he is, however, very unequal, often obscure and lagging, and is only really superior in what may be called the anecdotic part of his work. At the other end of France was produced by a singular collaboration the *Chanson de la Croisade d'Albigeois*, a work of double aspect, the first part of which, left unfinished in 1219 by its author (a Navarrese by origin), is of Catholic inspiration, while the second, due to an anonymous writer of talent, is more and more clearly favourable to the defenders of the south, and often finds eloquent accents in which to curse the invader. The author of the first part reproduces the form of the *Canso d'Antiocha* of Bechada, and the other follows him in introducing a slight metrical variant which is his personal note.

In the north it is not only in the domain subjected to the kings of England that historiography in the popular tongue began to flourish. It was born spontaneously with the Crusades, since those who remained in France needed to learn of these great events, and at first it was produced in the form of the songs of geste. It continued doubtless in the Holy Land, but the manuscripts have not come down to us; possibly it had already ventured on the exercise of prose. After the terrible catastrophe which destroyed the kingdom of Jerusalem and carried off the town from the Christians (1187), the squire of a great lord of the land, Ernoul, related in a simple prose the events which he had witnessed; his account, of which we do not know the

exact extent, was incorporated later in the *Book of the Holy Land* (see following period); it is in any case (and thereby merits mention) the earliest original historical recital in prose which has reached us. It is also to oversea expeditions that we owe the much more important work of Geoffroi of Villehardouin, marshal first of Champagne and then of Romania. This great lord dictated it shortly before his death (1212), which prevented him from finishing it, in the castle of Thrace where an astonishing fortune had established him. He wrote it for his friends, and also for his traducers in France, for the strange deviation which ended an expedition undertaken to deliver Jerusalem in a division of the Greek Empire between Venetians, French, and Lombards had been the object of numerous criticisms. The marshal only answered them indirectly, or in heaping reproaches on those who during the expedition acted other than he thought well to act. His sincerity is beyond doubt, but highly placed as he was, he was not acquainted with the "dessous des cartes"; those who led matters, Boniface of Montferrat and Dandolo, were on their guard against his loyal candour. What interests us here most, is the form in which he cast his account: it is sober, virile, energetic, and well worthy, by its clarity and firmness, to inaugurate French prose. As a launch follows a man-of-war, the account of Robert of Clairi (near Amiens) follows that of Geoffroi of Villehardouin: he was a poor Picardy knight who admires above all the wonders of Constantinople, and cherishes a deep rancour against the "high men" who had baulked the little ones of their legitimate booty; brave as well, pious and credulous, on his return to France (after 1210), he wrote in a language as naïve and simple as himself. These attempts at contemporary history in prose are novelties which are still far from being the rule: Henry of Valenciennes, who undertook towards 1210 a history of the second Latin Empire of Constantinople, put it in the form of a song of geste: we have his work only in an abridgement, and incomplete (supposing him to have finished it).

In France, the historiographer in French prose limits himself almost to translation. Thus was chiefly translated the chronicle of Turpin, and the versions made then, in which the advantage of prose over verse, in the matter of accuracy, was brought out, were destined to influence the birth of novels and histories in prose. Baldwin of Flanders, who became the first French Emperor of the East, had an universal history compiled, and quite at the end of this period we find old histories produced, translated or abridged from the Latin. In the Saintonge also was abridged, but with incredible blundering, a history of France which ends at the second race; an anonymous writer, attached to Robert of Béthune (+1230), does the same work a little more correctly, and adds a curious continuation, written with spirit, on the history of his time; he lengthens in the same way a history of the kings of England. On the other hand, the celebrated *History of the Holy Land* by William of Tyr is translated, and very well too; shortly afterwards, as a continuation, was added a chronicle, written in the East, but rehandled in France, which runs from 1180 to 1228, and blends in Ernoul's account. Thus on all sides a rich prose historiography was being prepared, which was, however, but feebly produced in the following period.

We will rapidly pass over the religious narrative poetry, however rich and curious it may be: it is, as we have said, frequently only original in details, the basis being borrowed from tradition or Oriental legends. Parts of the Bible and numerous apocrypha, miraculous tales relating to the Virgin (Gautier of Coinci, quite at the end of this period, deserves to be mentioned for the candour of his devotion, the occasional boldness of his satire, and the sometimes happy, but more often puerile refinement of his style), and pious tales of every kind are translated or adapted in verse: some of them are celebrated, like the *Haughty Emperor*, the *Angel and the Hermit*, the *Wicked Senechal*, the *Real-Ring*, whose sources, parallels, and imitations offer a fertile field to the researches of compared literature. Some pious tales

deserve to be mentioned because of their altogether mediæval character, like the very charming tale, *The Tombeur of Notre Dame*. Among the jongleurs were so-called "tombeurs," when their talent was limited to leaps and somersaults, a kind of exercise greatly appreciated and highly perfected. One of these "tombeurs" became a monk in an abbey consecrated to the Virgin, and for lack of any other science, in her honour executed secretly before her statue his best tricks; the monks who followed him to spy upon him saw with stupefaction Our Lady descend from her altar as he rested, and gently wipe away the sweat that rolled down his visage.

The *Lives of the Saints* are another form of pious narrations. Some are but translations of stories relatively authentic, and for that very reason offer hardly other than a philological interest; but those which enjoyed the greatest success may be traced back to Oriental legends, often as full of strange vicissitudes as the most fantastic romances of adventure. Such are the lives of Saint George, Saint John of the Golden Mouth, Saint John the Paulu, Saint Eustace, Saint Thaïs, Saint Margaret, Saint Catherine, etc. We will mention three for different reasons. The *Life of St. Gregory*, which belongs to the start of this period, and which is full of archaic and pathetic grace, leans possibly upon oral tradition, for we have no intermediary Latin text between the French version and the Byzantine and Sclavonic versions of the same theme. This theme, which has often been connected with the story of Œdipus, has doubtless only an original and remote relation to it. Here destiny is not in question; the hero is the fruit of incest, and the incest he in turn commits in marrying his mother (the resemblance lies in this) is not preceded by the murder of his father; he gives himself up to unheard-of penitence, which is not altogether justifiable, since his crime is involuntary, and through his merit is designated Pope by God Himself. The *Life of Saint Josaphat*, of which we possess many redactions, is curious because its real subject is the life of Buddha, Christianised first in a Pehlevi book of

the sixth century, then related in Greek and in Latin. The *Life of St. William of England* celebrates, as that of Saint Gregory, an utterly apocryphal saint; the history attributed to him belongs to the same cycle as that of Saint Eustace and tales of a wholly profane character; the religious element which it contains is introduced in the most awkward fashion, and if the Chrétien who signed this mediocre poem is Chrétien of Troyes, he must have lost, in wishing to write a pious work, all the gifts which distinguished him as a profane poet.

We may connect with religious poetry the religious dramas this epoch has left us. There are only two, but both are most remarkable. The first belongs to the category of the "mysteries," in the sense that the prophets and personages of the Ancient Testament who are considered to have "prefigured" the Messiah were worked in the Latin liturgical "Jeux" as witnesses of the mystery of the Redemption. The Anglo-Norman work, which is entitled "Representation of Adam," at first comprises the scene of Adam's fall, then the murder of Abel, and in the third place a procession of prophets such as we have in Latin. The germ of real dramatic qualities is to be noted in this work, where the dialogue in octosyllabic couplets is broken by decasyllabic quatrains. The scene where Satan tries to seduce Eve is of a true poet. The advanced presentment of the scene should also be noted: a serpent *artificiose compositus* rolling round the forbidden tree; already Hell was visible in the form of a maw whence the demons escaped; Limbo, where the just of the ancient law waited, was represented by a castle. The theatre was built against the church door, whence went out and in the *figura* which represented God the Father.—The other piece belongs to the class called "miracles," and is interesting by the fact that it is the work, not of a clerk, but of a lay and burgess poet, John Bodel of Arras, to whom we also owe a revived song of geste and lyric productions. The town of Arras had become as early as the end of the twelfth century the home of an intense poetical movement, of an

altogether burgess character. The *Pay of Saint Nicholas* must have been composed for a confraternity, and been represented on the saint's feast, one of whose miracles it introduces, which was already the object of a *Ludus* of Hilary. This remarkable piece, written in the most varied rhythmic form, presents two distinct aspects, one heroic and inspired by the spirit of the Crusades, the other popular and realistic, which the poet has developed with delight: we even find in the long tavern scenes the slang of robbers and gamblers. The "miracle" in its earliest form is stamped with a coarse and superstitious devotion, which the poet has not attenuated; but the extreme freedom with which he has treated a rather unattractive theme shows us what this supple form of "miracle" could become in deft hands, lending itself to the development of a purely human intrigue and to the painting of real life.

Morality in the Middle Ages, and particularly at this epoch, is almost inseparable from religion (if we except a few translations of ancient works, like the *Distichs* of Cato or the *Consolation* of Boethius), and both one and the other is readily mixed up with satire. Also satire, though most infrequently, is indulged in for itself, especially political satire: there was an exchange of pamphlets in verse between the subjects of the kings of France and England, of which only one, extremely curious, has reached us, the *Romance of the French*, by the Norman Andrew of Coutances. Of the three elements in question, morality, religion, satire, one or the other predominates in the moral poems which were composed then, and many of which had a great success. The best to our thinking is that which, for lack of a more precise title, is simply designated by the very name of *Moral Poem*, and which was composed in the neighbourhood of Liège, in the beginning of the thirteenth century, in Alexandrine monorhymed quatrains; the author, in a simple and expressive language, preaches Christian virtues with a spirit of moderation and charity, courageously rebukes the abuses of the great, and intercalates long recitals, like the life of Saint

Thaïs, the courtesan converted by Paphnutius. The famous *Verses of Death* of Hélinand, long a jongleur and then a monk at Froidmont, the *Romance of Charity*, and the *Miserere* of Bartholomew, recluse at Molliens-Vidame (Somme), are of a purely religious inspiration, but add to pious exhortations harsh blame of contemporary society, including the Church; all three are composed of strophes of twelve octosyllabic lines with two rhymes, a complicated and difficult form which indicates already that these poets are less concerned with touching the heart than with exciting admiration. They join, especially Bartholomew, to this research of versification, an elaboration of style which is far from being always in good taste, and shows the excessive and futile refinements of an overwrought art; but these brilliant defects charmed their contemporaries and several succeeding generations. More simple, and in matter more interesting, is the *Gold Farthing of God*, by a Norman clerk named William (to whom we owe several works, amongst others a *Bestiaire*), where he develops the evangelical parable of the "talent" confided by God to each one. This poem deserves to be mentioned with praise because of the generous and really Christian way in which William, quite alone in his opinion, protests against the pretended Crusade which then flung the knights of Northern France upon the South. Under the name of "Bible," which indicates the intention of the authors to write only the truth, we have two interesting poems, in which an ancient minstrel become monk, Guiot of Provins, and a Burgundian great lord, Huon of Berzé, who had taken part in the fourth Crusade and composed love songs, each express their sentiments on the life of the world and strive to improve it; in the first especially, interesting details are found about the customs and ideas of the age. These poems, which recall, save the form, the *Sermon* of Guichard of Beaujeu, on the other hand belong to a class of satire which consists in reviewing the different "conditions of the world," indicating what each one should be and what it unfortunately was in reality. The most curious specimen of

the kind is the *Book of Manners* of Stephen of Fougères, bishop of Rennes in 1168 (+1178), written in the archaic form of octosyllabic single-rhymed quatrains, in which, with an unexpected freedom in a prelate, the vices of clerks, the laity, and especially women, are reproved. We should note the *Way of Hell* of Raoul of Houdan, because this poem inaugurates in French a kind destined to great success. The poet in a dream takes the path that leads to Hell, and here sojourns awhile: the stages of the road and what he sees in Satan's kingdom make the object of personifications or metaphors imitated from Latin poetry (chiefly the *Psychomachia* of Prudence), but which, as well as the very plan of the voyage, seem to have sprung from the author's imagination; the whole is, besides, treated in a jesting spirit. The *Way of Heaven* made the pendant of the *Way of Hell*, and was afterwards more than once imitated. These poems are the prototype of a kind which must remotely have influenced the *Divine Comedy*, which obtained a prolix development in the fourteenth century in the *Pilgrimage of Man*, by William of Digulleville, and found its latest expression (much more serious than Raoul's) in the *Pilgrim's Progress* of John Bunyan.

This same Raoul of Houdan, in a work for that matter laborious and obscure, the *Romance of the Wings of Prowess*, offers us the first and interesting example in Northern France of a work of purely profane morality; others are to be found in the south of France, possibly even earlier. Prowess does not suffice the knight who would be worthy of his rank: it should have two wings, liberality and courtesy, and each of these wings is composed of seven plumes, which the poet enumerates and characterises. It is the allegory customary in treatises of religious morals which is here applied to an altogether mundane ideal. Other works not only stand outside Christian morals: they are, without saying so, expressly opposed to them. Such are the translations of Ovid's *Art of Love*, which more or less cleverly accommodate Ovid's principles to mediæval society. Such especially is the Latin book of

André the Chaplain, in which are codified, not without pedantry, the rules of "courtois" love as they were fashioned in the south, and had been imported into France: this singular book is the reflex of the tendencies and the occupations of the Provençal and French elegant courts, particularly that of Marie of Champagne. We must remark a little poem connected with the same order of ideas, the *Fableau of the God of Love* in monorhymed quatrains (later on lengthened under the title of *The Goddess Venus*). Here we see represented the court of the God of Love as the rhythmic Latin poetry of the cleric adapters of Ovid had represented it, where the birds are judges of love, and where lovers plead their cause; there are many extraordinary allegories in the taste of Raoul of Houdan.

All these theories of love are intimately connected with Latin poetry, whose influence dominates the entire epoch. We have pointed out the birth and early progress of the "courtois" art of the *trobadors* in the Limousin and neighbouring provinces. It spread with great rapidity in the south, beyond its primitive domains, where the dialects were closely related to the Limousin. This diffusion must have begun in the preceding period, though of this we have no absolute proof. We find as early as the twelfth century, in the poetry of Raimbaud, lord of Orange from 1155 to 1173, the art of the trobadors manifesting itself in Provence under its most decisive and already most artificial forms: such compositions must necessarily have been preceded by many others. The poets who cultivated the art, and who, not without dialectical variants, employed an almost uniform idiom, which constitutes "the language of the trobadors," belong to all parts of the south, to which Catalonia, and later on Northern Italy, should be added. Thus the tongue of the trobadors became a literary idiom for all the south of France, profoundly distinct from that which at the same time was established in the north, and was used not only for lyric poetry but for all writings in the popular tongue. If it were not for the political and religious events which, towards the

end of this period and the beginning of the following, connected, violently or pacifically, the southern provinces to royalty throned in Paris, a complete scission of Northern and Southern France might have taken place, and to-day we should have two Gallo-Roman literatures as well as two nationalities. It was nearly so in the twelfth century; but "Provençal" literature having gradually lost its proper form, and the southerners, from the fourteenth century, having begun to adopt Northern French as a literary language, we accept here the meridional literature of the Middle Ages as playing a dialectical part in French literature.

Nevertheless we cannot grant to the lyric poetry of the south the place it should deserve by its historical importance, and we will limit ourselves to a rapid sketch of its physiognomy. We have already indicated its principal features: they go on developing in this period, which is one of splendour. Love ever holds the preponderant place, and, as we have seen, it is chiefly a conventional love, which has its rules and formulæ like the poetry which serves to express it and the music which accompanies this poetry. The poets address their lyric homage to the ladies whose glory it constitutes, so that the obligatory precaution to designate them only by a pre-arranged *senhal* was often only a play, like all this poetry. Amongst other things, it is accepted that a man can only love a married woman, generally of a higher rank than his, and this is understood seeing the nature of this love, made up of submission and aspiration. The lady was hymned chiefly to be admired of *connaisseurs*, and she was hymned in requisite form. This does not prevent the utterance of some really tender and sincere notes in the midst of this conventional and wearisome rhetoric, above all from the earliest trobadors, Bernard of Ventadour before all others, perhaps almost the only one of all these singers of love who still touches our heart. The spirit which dictates the sentiments and their expression governs no less the poetic forms given to them: the first thing is to show oneself versed in the rules of the art, and to satisfy the experts. Each song must have a strophic construction of its own and

a music belonging to it, and this variety is all the more difficult to obtain because it is set within narrow limits: the rhymes must generally be the same in the entire piece, or at least in each pair of strophes; the richer and rarer they are the more appreciated they are, and the height of art is to employ such as have not yet been used, and which are only found in out-of-the-way words. This leads to a search after obscure and difficult words, to compose with them whole pieces of which the ordinary person understands nothing: this *trobar clus*, which we already find in Raimbaud of Orange, is carried to perfection by Arnaud Daniel, and procures him an admiration which does not cease with the reign of Provençal poetry, which Dante and Petrarch shared still more heartily even than the poet's contemporaries, and whose influence may be found in their works; but here it is singularly attenuated, and is reduced to its beneficent action, the importance of the selection and arrangement of words, that is to say, to style properly so called. It was the trobadors of this school who indirectly, and despite their defects, created modern style. We prefer, however, those who chose the *trobar leu*, and especially, after Bernard of Ventadour, Guiraud of Borneil, some of whose poems have almost a popular turn and a charm still to be felt.

Happily the poetry of the troubadours has treated other subjects than "courtois" love. *Serventois*, principally dedicated to political satire, and also to a personal and often coarse and violent satire, the *plaints* or regrets on the death of great personages or friends, the songs of the Crusade, and other kinds, show us a poetry more concerned with real life and full of interest for history. Marcabrun, Bertran of Born, Peter Cardinal, William Figueira, and others are as it were the journalists of their time: their songs are inspired by the ambient passions which excite them. The dependent relations of most of the professional troubadours upon the princes and great lords of their day make their work a precious source of every kind of information.

It is lyric poetry which constitutes the essence and distinc-

tive character of southern literature. It was not, however, unacquainted with the narrative style, and we have already mentioned some southern poems of an epic or romantic character. We have also cited some productions in the didactic style, but this class is closely mingled with the lyric; the *serventois* belong to it more or less completely. As early as the beginning of the thirteenth century, a Catalan, Raimon Vidal, composed a little treatise, the *Razos de trobar*, as a guide in language and versification to beginners in the difficult art of "trouver": it is the earliest essay in grammar produced by modern Europe, and however rudimentary, it is interesting because it is taken from reality, and does not borrow (like the subsequent *Donat Provençal*) the frames and formulæ of Latin grammars.

The lyric poetry of the troubadours has chiefly, we have said, an historic importance. In itself, with few exceptions, and in spite of its real qualities, it can hardly interest any but the erudite, because of its close connection with a special, and above all a factitious and conventional atmosphere. But it excited at the time of its production a general admiration, and everywhere it prompted imitation. The artistic poetry of Italy, Portugal, Spain, and Germany proceed from it. It is the tree whose graft fertilised all these plants, hitherto wild or immature. Its influence is still greater upon Northern France, and the "courtois" lyric poetry in "langue d'oïl" at this epoch is entirely under the dependence of its sister of "langue d'oc."

As we have already remarked, there existed in the north of France, in the twelfth century, a literature and a literary language too developed to allow the poets of the north, like those of Gascony or Provence, to adopt the Limousin idiom. It was in their own language that they strove to imitate the works of the trobadors when they became acquainted with them. It was, we have said, especially the double marriage of Aliénor of Poitiers which connected the two halves of France. Already during her union of fifteen years with Louis VII., the grand-daughter of William IX. certainly endeavoured to spread

around her the taste for social and poetical pleasures to which she was accustomed. When, thanks to his marriage with her, Henry II. united under his sway all Western France, there was evidently between Anjou, for example, or Touraine and Poitou a more intimate exchange of ideas and influences. The daughters of Aliénor and Louis VII., Mary of Champagne and Ale of Blois, above all the first, sought to transplant in their respective courts the habits of the small southern courts, and Queen Aélis, third wife of Louis VII., seems to have received and propagated the lessons of her daughter-in-law Marie, become his sister-in-law.

Anyhow French lyric poetry is not a simple adaptation of Provençal poetry. The vein, properly national, continued to flow, either alongside the current come from the south or mixing with it. "Weaving songs" are still made in imitation of the old ones, and Audefroi the Bastard, of Arras, even tries to compose them in the "courtois" fashion. Beside them may be remarked the curious group of the "chansons à personnages," which almost always bring into play a wife's quarrels with her husband, some of which are of a fresh and charming poetry, and the shepherd songs, in which the poet is represented as striving with varied success to gain the love of a shepherdess whom he meets in the fields, the May songs and the *caroles* (ring dances), whose refrains, unfortunately, are nearly all that is left of them, inserted in poems of diverse kinds: all these little pieces are more or less unknown in Provençal poetry, but possibly have, like the latter, at the start, a Poitevin origin, save naturally the weaving songs, which are all French. Altogether French also are the earliest songs of the Crusade, like that connected with the expedition of Louis VII. in 1146, and the satirical songs, of which we have only a few fragments. In the lyric poetry subjected to Provençal influences we recognise none the less features peculiar and French, and the more numerous and marked are these features, the greater is the value of the pieces. Those which are copied from the Provençal models are but faint reflections of these: such are the songs of Blondel of Nesle and the

majority of those of Gui of Couci and Gace Brulé. We find here the conventions of the art of the trobadors; for matter, the lady's perfections, her rigours, the poet's hopeless love, the fear of slanderers; for form, the same laws of rhythmic construction and rhyme, the same material of expressions; however, the French did not adopt the use of the *senhal*, nor did they attempt the *trobar clus*, nor, in general, did they supply all the strophes with the same rhymes, nor follow the Provençals in their refined habit of rhyming, not the lines of the same strophe, but of one strophe to another. They often preserved the use of the refrain, abolished in the south, and the pieces which are supplied with it, though otherwise not exempt from Provençal influences, have a peculiar and often pungent savour; such especially are those of Gontier of Soignies.

It is probable that we have lost the earliest lyric poetry of the Provençalised school. The first "courtois" songs to which we can relatively assign a date are those of Chrétien of Troyes, composed no doubt at the court of Mary of Champagne towards 1170; they are full of Provençal ideas upon love. Those of Conon of Béthune are the most interesting we have: this great lord, who died in 1219 regent of the Latin Empire of Constantinople which he had helped to found, has put naturalness, truth, and visibly the expression of personal sentiments into his songs. His Crusader's song (1189), in which he shows his heart torn between the regret of leaving his lady and the duty of fighting for God, has served as model for many others, especially for Hugh of Berzé, a crusader in 1202. Others are political or satirical, and at times of a real eloquence.

The imitated art of the troubadours never had in Northern France the position it had in its own land: the professional "trouveurs" never acquired there the importance of the trobadors; but in the north as in the south, and even more so than in the south, it was cultivated by men of the highest class: Jean of Brienne, later on king of Jerusalem, Conon of Béthune, Gui of Couci, William of Ferrières, the

Vidame of Chartres, Hugh of Berzé, Renaud of Sable, Tibaud of Blaizon, Gace Brulé, are all great lords, or at least knights. This is quite a new fact, which gives its peculiar feature to chivalrous and "courtois" society at the end of the twelfth century. Conon of Béthune, in 1180, singing in Paris before the young king Philip, his mother Aélis, his sister Mary, and all the assembly of barons and ladies, songs he had composed, and receiving their censure for having mixed up "words of Artois" with the pure French, he endeavoured to use, is a picture the court of Louis VI. could not have offered. In these songs, especially in the songs of the Crusade, piety, prowess, and love mingle or clash in more or less conventional formulæ, but give us a clear idea of what chivalry was at the moment of its greatest brilliance, and have supplied the features modern imagination delights to regard as those of the Middle Ages.

But what we must also remark is that from this time the new art spreads in other classes. The town of Arras had founded since the end of the twelfth century, in imitation of the Pui in Velai, a *Pui Nostre Dame*, where there were also poetic competitions, between burgess and clerk certainly more than between knights. In this centre, Provençal imitation had deeply penetrated, without altogether effacing French tradition. The *pastoreles* of John Bodel belong to this tradition (in the limits indicated above), and his *Congés* owe nothing to southern influence. They are composed in the strophe of the *Verses of Death*, and contain the poet's farewell in 1205 addressed to all who in Arras had loved and protected him, before shutting himself up in a neighbouring lepers' asylum, where the aldermen had created for him a "fief," which seems to have been established in perpetuity for poets (at any rate another, Baude Fastoul, obtained it fifty years later). In spite of the jesting tone which the poor minstrel strives to apply even to his horrible malady, this poem has a sincere note, and closes in a touching fashion the career of the author of the *Play of St. Nicholas* and the *Song of the Seasons*.

Let us sum up in a few words the literary activity of this fertile and brilliant period. It is eminently social and aristocratic, and it is the "courtois" spirit, born in the south, and incorporated above all in the lyric poetry, which is its distinctive characteristic. Epic national poetry is continued, but in revivals or imitations; Romantic poetry, of antique origin, Celtic or Oriental, is widely spread; humorous tales take on a literary form. Descriptive and satirical didactic poetry reveal germs which developed later. The lyric poetry of the south flourishes; that of the north is influenced by that of the south, all in preserving the taste of natal land. Prose starts to life under different forms, the most interesting of which are that of the romance (Arthurian) and of history written by witnesses and actors. French literature in its double form, meridional and septentrional, becomes the object of the admiration and imitation of Romance and Germanic Europe, and dominates all the literary production of the Latin world.

V. From Louis IX. to Charles IV. (1226–1328).

The century which extends from the accession of Louis IX. to that of Philip VI. is far from having the literary importance and splendour of that which preceded it. Politically it considerably advanced the unification of the kingdom: the south (save Guyenne belonging to the kings of England), comprising Provence, was more or less directly united to it; the royal domain increased in every sense; royalty gained in power, and succeeded in imposing everywhere certain general measures; by the same stroke feudality found its independence diminished; the towns, though still restricted in their liberties, increased their industry and commerce. In the religious and Latin world it was an epoch of great activity: the University of Paris became the intellectual centre of Europe, witnessed fierce struggles between the purely scholastic traditions of the preceding age and the tendencies

introduced by the newly-discovered books of Aristotle and the Commentaries of Averroës; the Church was at once renewed and troubled by the action of the orders of St. Francis and St. Dominick, which, instituted in Italy, rapidly spread over Europe, by the feud between Frederick II. and the Church, by the difference between Philippe le Bel and Boniface VIII., by the suppression of the Templars. What remained of the Latin Realm in the East was destroyed, save Cyprus, Armenia, and Rhodes. The framework of the society of the Middle Ages insensibly slackened and prepared the coming of new forms.

French literature still dominated Europe, but its reign was nearing its end. From the beginning of the fourteenth century Dante had emancipated that of Italy, which was destined to succeed it in the hegemony. In itself this literature, which had served as the organ of chivalrous and feudal society, grew weaker too, or entered upon another road. The romantic phase of European civilisation went ever effacing itself, and the modern phase, eminently burgess and rational, increased in strength. So we see all the old styles weakening and dying out, and others, quite subordinate before, developing more and more, and finally occupying the first rank.

The jongleurs of the thirteenth century had not ceased to exercise their craft, but their ancient epic repertory fell by degrees out of fashion with the upper classes. To the monotonous recital of songs of geste were preferred the recitations of adventures or the reading of romances in verse or in prose, the taste for which spread more and more. Princes replaced the "ménestrels de bouche," by the "ménestrels d'instruments"; the singers of geste were increasingly reduced to burgess and popular audiences, and forgot to join to their craft the thousand varied talents they exercised formerly.

So the national epopee throve on scarce else than its ancient basis. On the one hand it tended to popularity, on the other it sought to maintain itself in favour in the

aristocratic sphere by recourse to exterior refinements of form. To the start of this period belong no doubt a few poems of rather good style, like *Gaidoni*, a few rehandlings like that of *Raoul of Cambrai*, in which the old epic spirit is felt. But the great national current come from so far begins to exhaust itself. Adenet le Roi, towards 1270, revives feebly, with some futile refinements of rhyme, *Bertha of the Big Feet* (valuable because we have not got its anterior form), and other poems. His imitators are even still more feeble. The national epopee is at death's door.

The *matière de Bretagne* is hardly more living. The *Beaudous*, the *Floris* of Robert of Blois are tiresome and half didactic. The interminable romances of *Escanor* and *Claris* and *Laris* only offer us the spinning out of commonplaces a hundredfold hackneyed. The great romances of the preceding epoch are still read, they are abridged or inordinately lengthened by the interpolation of new adventures, as poor in invention as in interest, but nothing new is written.

The romance of adventure has rather more vitality. In Provence the charming though hardly moral tale of *Flamenca*, written in the very beginning of this period, enables us to follow, with a thousand interesting details of the social life of the times, the development of a *liaison* in the aristocratic world, of which this picture, to tell the truth, gives us a very peculiar notion. Gautier of Tournai, in *Gilles of Chin* (towards 1250), gives this form to the fabulous tale of an historical personage of the twelfth century famous in his own country (Hainault); Philip of Beaumanoir, the celebrated jurisconsult, wrote two romances in his youth, the subject of which he probably found in England: one (the *Manekine*) presents a variant of the well-known story of the virtuous woman persecuted; the other (*John of Dammartin et Blonde of Oxford*), most pleasing, is a simple love-tale connected with the ancient poem of *Horn*. The romance of the *Châtelain of Couci*, by Jacquemon Saquet, is an extremely interesting work. Like *Flamenca*, it is a picture of love in the fashionable world: an old Oriental

tale of the atrocious revenge of a husband who compels his wife to eat her lover's heart is connected with the Châtelain of Couci, the *trouveur* of the twelfth century, and songs of this poet are intercalated. To the same class belongs the charming story of the *Châtelaine of Vergi*, where two lovers perish, victims of the jealousy and indiscretion of a great lady. The two long romances of *Cléomadès* by Adenet and *Méliacin* by Girard of Amiens are independent and parallel versions of the Arabian tale (of Indian origin) of *The Enchanted Horse*. Adenet's poem, his best work, is superior to Girard's, but now one, now the other, more nearly approaches the original. Towards 1316 a poet called Jean Maillart wrote the last romance of adventure in verse which has probably been composed, the *Count of Anjou*, about a subject resembling that of the *Manekine:* it is a pleasing and facile work, and it is astonishing that the taste for such reading should have vanished completely. It seems it must have been replaced by that of prose recitals; but of these we have only scarce samples, and belonging to the thirteenth century: *Beautiful Jane* (variant of the theme of the *Violette*) and the *Countess of Pontieu*, a singular story, which gives a French ancestress to the Sultan Saladin; but these are stories rather than romances.

In the "antique" matter we must note, not for its value, but for the success it obtained, the poem of the *Desires of the Peacock*, composed, 1310–1315, by Jacques of Longuyon. It is connected quite superficially with an episode of the romance of *Alexander*, and is written in the form of the songs of geste, traditional for the cycle; but it is purely a romance treating of gallantry in the factitiously chivalrous spirit of the times; it was much admired and frequently imitated. The romance of *Cæsar*, by Jacques of Thuin (in Hainault), is in prose, and relies to a great extent on Lucain and the historians, but the author has introduced a great love episode in the style of the romances of the Table Round; the curious thing is, that ten years later, towards 1250, Jacques of Forest put it into monorhymed *laisses*, so difficult was it found to accept the habit of reading prose.

Fableaux still continued in favour; many of those we possess were doubtless composed at this epoch; some of the most pungent belong to Rustebeuf; the latest seem to have been written by John of Condé at the end of this period. The taste perished with the fashion, for the great lords, of having jongleurs at their feasts, who carried around the repertory. Pious tales, like profane tales, are yet flourishing in the beginning of our period, and the collection known as the *Lives of the Fathers* contains two series, originally alien one to the other, amongst which some of the best are found; but this class also disappears: in 1330 Eustace, prior of the Fontaine Notre-Dame (Aisne), wrote perhaps the last of them.

The cycle of *Renard*, such as we have it, has no doubt some branches, the feeblest or coarsest, which belong to the middle of the thirteenth century; but it has also lost its vitality: it degenerates into mere personal satire in Philip of Novare's *Branch of Renard*, into satirical allegory in the *Crowning of Renard* and in the *New Renard* of Jacquemard Gelée (Lille, 1288). It becomes the pretext for a moral, satirical, and historical mass of rubbish—curious from many points of view—from the pen of a clerk of Troyes, who wrote his *Renard contrefait* in 1322, and amplified it in 1328. To this kind of allegorical satire belongs the romance of *Fauvel* (1310), which only deserves mention because it contains certain features interesting for historical reasons, especially as regards the Templars, and for its unmerited success.

We will presently speak here of lyric poetry, because it also belongs to the heritage of the preceding epoch. While, as one of the consequences of the Albigense war, lyric poetry was dying out in the south or sought a home in Italy and Spain, it continued for a while in France, and even produced its most illustrious representative, Thibaud (+1253), count of Champagne and king of Navarre. Although in general his songs are not free from the monotony and conventionalism of their kind, he has given them some

originality, and often a good deal of grace: he was regarded as the best songster of his day and was even admired by Dante. With a few of his contemporaries, like Raoul of Soissons and Charles of Anjou, he is the last of the great lords who cultivated this elegant art: the taste for song-making and for listening to songs had died out in the courts. On the other hand, as we have seen, this originally aristocratic taste, thanks to the institution of *puis*, had passed to the clerk and burgess circles of a few large northern towns, especially Arras. There, amongst others, flourished Guilebert of Berneville, whose songs rank with the best. Adam of the Halle, who has elsewhere a greater claim upon posterity, composed a number of little pieces which by their brevity already thrust lyric poetry into the forms of the succeeding periods.

But it was the *jeu parti* which had the greatest success, specially in the burgess society of Arras, and it is curious to see this refined diversion of courts become the frame of discussions like that which took place between Thomas Erier and Guilebert, to know if Thomas would sacrifice to whatever advantage his passion for peas and bacon. The "sottes chansons" are closely approached, which are a parody, often trivial and generally gross, of the love songs. The Arras school also assiduously cultivated the *pastorele*, and delighted in those whose principal subject was the life, observed or imagined, of shepherds. Neither did it forget songs in honour of the Virgin, to which there was reserved the title of *serventois*, and for which the *pui* had really been founded. Later on we shall have a word to say about the pieces of a satirical character, which, sometimes, have the form of songs. As in the seigneurial courts, Provençalised lyric poetry—in which as well an element really French was maintained—had nearly died out before the end of the thirteenth century. Later it revived under the forms imposed by the fourteenth century, but almost solely as religious poetry, and without producing anything of literary value.

We hasten on to the more living and interesting classes, at the head of which we place history. History in verse continued by tradition, and produced even lengthy works, like the Chronicles of Philip Mousket (Tournai, 1243), of William Guiart (Orleans, 1306), of Godfrey of Paris (1317 and succeeding years), of William Anelier of Toulouse, in the form of the song of the Albigense Crusade, on a war of Navarre (1276–77), but they are only interesting for the historian. Historiography in prose is quite another thing. We do not refer to the big compilations of ancient history, nor to the translations, then begun, of the Latin Chronicles on the history of France, nor even to the chronicles of contemporary events, written in France or in the East, where the personality of the authors is not manifested. But the thirteenth century has left us three of the most precious monuments, in many ways, of French historic prose. The earliest, no doubt, is the book an Italian become French, Philip of Novare, wrote about his own life and the part he had taken in the war carried on in Cyprus and in Syria from 1229 to 1243 between the partisans of Frederick II., become king of Jerusalem by his marriage, and those of the powerful family of the Ibelins. Philip was passionately one of the latter, and to this we owe the preservation of his account of this war in a compilation made in Cyprus, in the fourteenth century, for a member of the family. Unfortunately, the compiler has left out the first part of the book, where the author described his youth, and how he went from Lombardy to the East. Even the part preserved has suffered alterations and interpolations, but it remains, nevertheless, one of the most valuable texts left us of this epoch. Although it treats a subject virtually historical, it has retained the style of memoirs: Philip is perpetually in view and in the foreground, although he leaves the big parts to his patrons, the Ibelins, and especially to old John of Beyrouth, of whom he traces an admirable portrait. He excels in painting persons, friends and enemies alike, the latter with malice full of humour, for he is

essentially gay, even in the most difficult circumstances. He was a poet as well as a good knight, and he composed on current events most amusing songs, several of which he inserted in his narrative. He gave in fun to the chiefs of both parties names taken from the *Romance of Renard* (he even composed thus, as we have seen, a whole "branch of Renard"), and the name he chose for himself was Chanticleer the Cock, which suits him wonderfully because of his courage, his high spirits, his somewhat impudent gaiety, and his singing. We see him before a castle encouraging the besiegers, and mocking the besieged with his songs. Though a young man, he was already versed in feudal law, which the Ibelins pretended to represent in all its purity, and to defend against the Emperor's usurpations; afterwards he wrote a work on jurisprudence which became a classic, the *Livre de forme de plaid.* He was acquainted with all the subtleties of the law, and applied them on occasion without excessive scruple. In his old age he wrote a moral treatise, the *Four Ages of Man*, where he shows traces of senility, but which still contains flashes of just and penetrating observation. This Lombard inaugurated the style of the Memoir, which in France was destined to such a brilliant future—for such the books of Villehardouin and Robert de Clairi cannot be called, since here the personality of the writers hardly appears.

This quality of personality is revealed almost as much as in Philip's book in that which, about 1273, John of Joinville, seneschal of Champagne, wrote on the Crusade he had taken part in with St. Louis. It is probable that the idea of writing it came to him on reading the chronicle of Villehardouin—whose family he had entered by marriage; but the two books are as unlike as the two men. Joinville simply wished to put into writing the personal memories he retained of the expedition, chiefly of the sterile and tragic campaign of Egypt, in which, with the king, he was taken prisoner, and had twenty times almost perished. He had become an intimate friend of Louis IX., and he wrote down

with delight, with admiration, but with entire freedom, what he recalled of the king's actions and conversation. The fidelity of his memory, the veracity of his character (though unconsciously he exaggerated slightly his own part), the ingenuousness of his soul of brave knight and convinced believer, give to his narrative an unparalleled value and charm, which, despite a negligence sometimes excessive, are increased by the familiar manner of his style. His book is not written, it is spoken, and affords us the unique pleasure of hearing, as if we were assisting, the pleasing and copious conversation of a "preudome" of the thirteenth century. This gossip already charmed those who enjoyed it directly, and they often made the seneschal repeat his stories of the great expedition and of the good king; the older he grew, the more the tales of this survivor of a remote and regretted age were appreciated. He was regarded as the last witness and the supreme arbitrator of an old-fashioned courtesy. Queen Jane of Champagne, wife of Philip IV., begged of him to collect his tales in a volume "on the words and acts of St. Louis." Joinville, who was then nearly eighty, tried to compile this book in taking as the centre of it his memoirs of the Crusade—of which, however, he himself, and not the king, was the principal personage; he started with a few rather confused reminiscences of the king's youth, and a certain number of memorable words he had heard him utter, and ended with a picture still more confused of the last years of the king. The queen Jane having died in the interval, he offered the book thus arranged to her son Louis, king of Navarre and count of Champagne, later on king of France. These two additions to the primitive work contain extremely valuable matter; they alone have preserved for us many features of the private and public life of St. Louis, especially the curious tale of his difficulties with his mother, and the ever-popular scene of the justice he rendered under an oak-tree. But they are badly composed, and are crowded with idle repetitions. The whole forms none the less an incomparable book, which gives us of

the time the author lived, and of the author himself, both the most faithful and most pleasing image, and which, for this reason, will be read in all times.

Very different from the books of Philip of Novare and John of Joinville is the third historical work—or accepted as such—to which we would draw attention. Philip and John are important personages who relate at first hand the adventures they shared in; the anonymous "ménestrel" who, in 1260, wrote out the fragment of French history he was in the habit of reciting to the burgess class of Rheims only knew by hearsay what he related, and, above all in the case of the olden times (he begins with Louis VII.), mixed up freely both persons and dates. His book is most amusing and even instructive as a specimen of popular history of the period; its form is delicious in certain parts, principally in those the least worthy of credence. The alert, picturesque, and rhythmic prose resembles that of *Aucassin and Nicolette:* we see that it also was made to be recited and not read, and that the style is so condensed for recital. It is here we first greet the legend of Blondel's devotion to Richard Cœur de Lion, and of the means by which he recognised the king in his prison, and was recognised by him.

What is most vital in the literature of the thirteenth century is instruction, satire, and allegory, three elements often intimately connected. Instruction in its purely religious form produced an excellent book, whose latest redaction, terminated in 1279 for Philip III. by the Dominican Lawrence, his confessor, received the name of *Somme le Roi;* here we find a valuable picture of customs and a preaching full of unction. Of a like form, but a less felicitous one, is the *Manual of Sins* of W. de Wadington. There are also many sermons, most of them quite valueless. We should point out those of the Anglo-Norman Franciscan Nicole Bozon (towards 1320), which abound in tales, fables, parables, and all kinds of similes (so-called "examples"), exposed with a naïveté not wanting in grace. The poem of the *Tourney of Antichrist*, by Huon of Méri, is an imitation of

the *Way of Hell* of Raoul of Houdan, in which religious teaching is but a pretext, and where the allegorical style, peculiarly Raoul's, is developed with a certain verve, while are oddly mixed up the intervention of the most celebrated knights of the Table Round with the personifications of vices and virtues taken from the *Psychomachia* of Prudence. The taste for allegory also finds a singular satisfaction in the "Christian moralisation" imposed upon Ovid's *Metamorphoses* by an unknown Franciscan; here was the means of edification allied to a taste for narratives often more than profane.

But purely profane instruction was spread in every form in the popular tongue to respond to public desire. It is still mixed up with the religious element, especially in the strange book of *Sidrac*, composed possibly in *langue d'oc* at Lyons in 1245, but translated into French half a century later; they are answers to the questions of a king *de omni re scibili et quibusdam aliis*, by an imaginary philosopher, Sidrac, who lived before the Deluge, but who was acquainted by revelation with the Christian doctrine; the answers are as adventurous as the questions are puerile; but this nourishment was solid and seemed to be savoury to the minds of the time. The same form of question and reply is found in the book of *Placide and Timeo*, offered to Philip the Fair, where, however, a little more scientific spirit appears. The *Image of the World* by Gautier of Metz, in verse, and especially the *Treasure*, written in French prose towards 1260 by the Florentine Brunetto Latin, then exiled, are encyclopedias for the use of the laity, as in those days many were composed for the use of the clerks: in the latter, and the most remarkable, we find, alongside of the traditional matter which constitutes the basis, political and literary remarks peculiar to the author. The French language then seemed the only one fit for serious prose; the Venetian Marco Polo employed it, but athwart two different interpreters (in 1299 and in 1307), to preserve the infinitely valuable narrative of his voyage in the East. To it, in 1305, the Armenian prince Haiton, become a monk

at Poitiers, had recourse to make known his country, and indicate the proper means for a more fortunate crusade.

With instruction may be connected a class then abundantly represented, and which, mediocre as poetry, is often valuable for the historian and the archæologist: the descriptive and enumerative class. We have a collection of little pieces, generally called *dits*, which tell of different trades, of the streets, the churches, and the fairs of Paris, of certain arts, of hunting, etc. Jokes are often mingled with description, and satire also. Rustebeuf, for instance, in imitating in a very gay fashion the "advertisement" of a vender of miraculous remedies, or in characterising each of the religious orders of Paris, seeks to excite laughter or satisfy malignity. Often pleasure is found in starting debates between personifications in the taste of those we have already seen. There is a discussion between Lent and "Charnage" (time when it is permitted to eat meat), another between philosophy and the seven liberal arts, threatened in the schools by an exclusive devotion to dialectics. All this production is eminently civic and burgess. Such cannot be said of poems describing the chivalrous feasts still in favour, like the *Tourney of Chauvenci*, description of a great tourney (1289) by the herald of arms James Bretel, or the *Tourney of Ham* (1278) by John Sarrazin, who, oddly enough, introduces the heroes of the Table Round in the midst of contemporary personages.

The satirical element, already mingled with several descriptive pieces, reigns almost exclusively in a number of little poems directed against the general corruption of the world and the Church, against women, against fugitive fashions and professional abuses, against monks and parsons. The most remarkable and interesting of the satirical poets is Rustebeuf, probably a Champenois by origin, whom we find established in Paris during the reigns of Louis IX. and Philip III. Not that the satirical part of Rustebeuf's work has the greatest poetical value: its real originality lies in the few pieces, unique of their kind, where he himself is in view, with his domestic miseries, his needs, his very vices

(and especially his passion for the dice, which he strikingly paints); he has found here a humorous and melancholy note, a truth and gaiety of expression, a free and familiar turn, which make these little pieces, of a vivid rhythm, and so curious besides in realism, pure medallions in strong relief. He tried his hand at all styles, making the most from a business point of view of his talent, was paid for his blames and his praises, for his pious legends rhymed or dramatised, for his funeral orations on great personages or his works on passing events. His satires, all the same, though some of them may have procured him secret subsidies, sprang from his heart and represent his real feelings. He jeers at the "dévots," the "papelards," as he calls them, and does not spare the king himself, whose tendencies were too monastic for his taste; he delivers himself at the expense of the "béguines" newly introduced into France, and protected by the king, an epigram which is a pure masterpiece of malicious irony, preserved by its very brevity from the weaknesses and blots which generally mar his best poetry. So Rustebeuf began the war of the French spirit against hypocrisy and false devotion, which John of Meun was to resume, and which many another was to pursue down to Molière, Voltaire, and Courier, a war in which it is often very difficult to prevent true piety from believing itself wounded by the blows aimed at its double. But at least with Rustebeuf the distinction is real. There is no doubt of the sincerity of his faith, and we see him carry on the crusade with the same ardour he employs against the Jacobins, and rhyme with as much conviction a *fableau* where a Franciscan conducts himself in an abominable fashion, and another where, in favour of a preaching friar, one of the most naïve instances of the infinite mercy of the Virgin is recorded. In spite of all, he remains, if the word may be applied to the epoch, a "Gallican," and does not spare the Pope the truth, or what he believes to be the truth, without taking the trouble, be sure, of verifying his statements very carefully.

Quite a special sort of education was that connected with

"courtoisie"; we saw its appearance in the preceding epoch; now it develops in numerous little poems, principally in that of Robert of Blois, on the good manners a lady should have. The short poem of the *Order of Chivalry* traces in an imaginary frame the ideal picture of what a knight should be. Bawdwin of Condé and his son John (thirteenth to fourteenth centuries), in their moral sayings are inspired by an analogous ideal. These teachings are still half religious, but the didactics of mundane love, inaugurated, also after Ovid, in the twelfth century and codified by Andrew the Chaplain, continue to spread their scarce Christian precepts. The *Art of Love* is once more translated, not without necessary alterations and interpolations; short pieces are composed where the doctrines of "courtois" love are inculcated. Richard of Fournival (of Arras, +1260), canon as he was, had the strange notion of adapting to love the *Bestiaire*, which until then had served for mystic allegories; but he accomplished most ingeniously this *jeu d'esprit*, the fundamental idea of which was less ingeniously developed by Margival in the *Panther of Love*.

It is also allegory (but less remote, and joined to the moral personification originated in the *Psychomachia*) that a young clerk of the Orléanais, William de Lorris, employed in writing, towards 1237, the *Romance of the Rose*, which death prevented him from finishing. It is an "art of love" put into action and enclosed in the setting of a dream, a setting handed down from antiquity. One May-day Lover, aged twenty, penetrates into the garden of Love: he sees a rose and would pluck it; Welcome lets him approach it, but Danger (woman's resistance), helped by Evil Mouth (slander and the fear it inspires), Shame, and Fear, repulse him. In vain Reason tries to persuade him to renounce his enterprise. Friend, in whom he confides, encourages him, on the contrary, to renew his attempt, and Venus, thrusting her torch over Welcome while Danger sleeps, almost decides him to let Lover pluck the rose. But Evil Mouth has warned Jealousy, who reprimands Shame and Fear; they awaken Danger, Lover is

expelled, and Jealousy locks up Welcome in a tower where an old woman is charged to watch him. Lover exhales his grief in a monologue, in the middle of which the poem stops. The plan of this poem is both easy to understand and complicated in its elements, which are of a heterogeneous nature and do not hang well together. The human personages (Lover, Friend, the old woman), along with mythological gods (Venus and Love) and purely philosophical personages, lead an action whose centre is an allegory, the rose, symbol of the loved woman, but only in as far as she is the object of desire: her perfections (beauty, courtesy, etc.) are represented by the arrows Love darts at Lover, her moral dispositions (inclination, refusal, fear, modesty) by the personages who act not in but round her, which brings about the singular fact that it is all the while Welcome, masculine personage, who discourses with Lover, who is shut up in the tower and lectured by the old woman. This form of personification, no longer of human qualities, weaknesses, and tendencies in general, but of the transient dispositions of an individual, is the invention of William de Lorris; it is more subtle than felicitous. During more than two centuries a completely false kind of literature existed through it, where the psychological observation of amorous sentiments, which Chrétien of Troyes and his school had often so well exercised, is replaced by the everlasting struggles between Danger and Welcome, by the invocation of Frankness and Pity against Shame and Fear, etc. This new kind of mythology dispensed the poets from observing and almost from thinking; with its air of interpreting reality it was most deficient in it. It was fatal to French poetry. But William is not altogether responsible for the consequences of the success of his poem: it was not his intention to supply all love poetry with a fixed and conventional setting; he simply wished to word his own dream of love. It amused him to construct it with notions borrowed from all sides, in Ovid and his imitators, in the earlier allegorical poetry, in Latin and French poems where personifications played part. Wishing to relate a connected action—how love is born

and develops, and the obstacles it encounters before attaining its end—he has created fresh personifications which were necessary to the progress of his little drama. William wrote for cultured circles. He only praised sincere and delicate love; however scabrous his subject, he never fell into grossness. He holds still to the school of the preceding age. He makes Love give "commandements" to Lover, which recall those of Andrew the Chaplain, besides precepts of good form taken from Ovid. All the same, it is not "courtois" love in all its rigour: woman is no longer lifted above man as with the trobadors and in *Lancelot*. She is, before everything, a desirable object, and the poet finds his inspiration in Ovid principally and in the mediæval Latin poem *Pamphilus*, where a young man succeeds in seducing a young girl. In him we find the spirit of the clerks—who in the Middle Ages were the lovers *par excellence*—in opposition to the inspiration of great ladies. William has real talent; his verse is facile, clear, often expressive, and above all his descriptions contain some of the best passages of our ancient poetry.

This unfinished work was taken up again towards 1278 by another Orleans clerk, John Clopinel of Meun, who lived as a student in Paris. It would be impossible to imagine two more opposite minds than those of William and John; two books more different, under the apparent resemblance of an identity of form, than the two parts of the *Romance of the Rose*. To the 4000 lines of William, who probably would only have added one or two thousand more, John attaches more than 18,000, written with a verve at times energetic, but often with a rapidity which spares us neither prolixity nor platitude. Whereas William carefully followed a well-combined plan, John indulged in every digression he had a mind to. The subject of the poem, the conquest of the rose by Lover, is often but an accessory lost to sight: Lover himself, instead of suffering and acting, is but the benevolent listener to interminable discourses addressed him by Reason, Friend, False-Seeming, which unfold a kind of disordered encyclopedia, taken from varied sources but penetrated with the author's

spirit, a bold, cynical, nowise religious, eminently burgess spirit, and at times quite modern. The centre of the book is formed of the long discourse of the old woman—whom Lover has bought over—to Welcome, a real course of "morale lubrique" in part borrowed from an elegy of Ovid, but enriched with realistic and vigorous details. This strange intercalation in the pleasing and "courtois" work of the first author is stamped where women are concerned with the profoundest contempt; here are gathered all the insults to them which formed almost a special branch of literature. We also find a coarse naturalism which appears again, and with a certain grandeur, in the episode where Nature confesses to her priest Genius and complains that man alone in the world refuses to obey her with docility. There is an attack against celibacy, even ecclesiastical, which Alain of Lille, author in the twelfth century of a Latin poem imitated here, would not have dared. In this, as frequently elsewhere, John of Meun reminds us of Rabelais. Audacious in quite another way is the episode of False-Seeming, personification of hypocrisy, whom Love, despite his disdain, usefully employs in strangling Evil Mouth. The speech where he discloses his plan of action and the secret of his power is an extremely violent attack upon the mendicant orders (above all the Dominicans). At length, after so many dissertations, satires, sneers, and coarsenesses, Love, at the head of all his vassals, storms the tower, where Venus flings her torch: Danger, Shame, and Fear flee, and Welcome lets Lover pluck the rose.

The disconnected work of William of Lorris and John of Meun had soon an immense success, the first part chiefly in elegant society, the second chiefly in the burgess and University classes. It was also, or rather the second part —for the first was inoffensive—strongly attacked as immoral and corrupting, but it found defenders. In the beginning of the fifteenth century a lively discussion on the subject took place, between, on the one hand, Gerson and Christine of Pisan, and on the other doctors and magistrates of high rank. As soon as printing was introduced, the

Romance of the Rose was frequently published, and, under Francis I., Marot produced an edition modernised in language, which the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries read still with pleasure. It remains the best known, at least in name, of mediæval works, and if it does not possess a high poetic value, it has at least a real historic importance. In the first part it is the gracious flower, as it were the crowning, of the artistic poetry of the clerks of the aristocratic and "courtois" epoch; in the second, it is the inauguration of the literature of the clerks of the burgess and reasoning epoch. For long, and this was a grave error, it was regarded as opening French literature; in reality it opens one period and closes another. The spontaneous, unconscious, almost infantine dream of the Middle Ages is ended, or will only reappear in vague intermittences: modern literature, whose essential elements are philosophical thought and knowledge of antiquity, is inaugurated.

There remains for us to speak of the dramatic poetry of the thirteenth century. Beneath its religious aspect it is scarcely represented. We have only a specimen of each kind: an Anglo-Norman *Resurrection*, whose interest specially consists in the fact that the dialogue is intercalated in an explanation of the principal players, and the miracle of *Théophile* by Rustebeuf (a Byzantine legend widely known in the Middle Ages, where probably the earliest form of a treaty made with the devil is found): it is an extremely feeble work (we have also a short fragment of a Limousine Christmas Mystery).

But the profane theatre has left us two quite original works, both due to Adam of the Halle, a clerk of Arras turned man of the world, who was taken to Naples by Charles of Anjou and died there. The *Jeu Adam* is a strange piece, without analogy in any literature; its second title, *Play of the Leaf*, indicates that it formed part of the amusements given in the month of May on platforms erected in the open air and framed in foliage. In certain respects it announces the *sotie*s of the fifteenth century, but it

differs from these by its direct realism, and above all by its altogether personal character. The poet himself takes a part, and certainly played his own *rôle;* he reveals himself hesitating if he will remain at Arras with the wife he has just married, or if he will go to Paris to finish his studies. His father, who has to be entreated to give the necessary funds for the journey, his neighbours, his companions, the burgesses of the town, appear in turn, and are the butt of satirical raillery. The whole is set in an amusing picture of a fair-gathering, where a monk exhibits relics, where a "physician" tells fortunes, and tries to heal a madman who utters a heap of nonsense, and ends by a long tavern scene (recalling that of *St. Nicholas*), where the monk is the victim of merry swindling. In the midst of this crudely-coloured Flemish picture a fantastic scene is presented: three fairies appear—the three fairies who in popular belief presided over the fates of men—and announce that Adam will forget everything in his wife's arms and will not go to Paris.

The other piece of Adam is quite different. The *Play of Robin and Marion* is an enlarged pastoral in which are united the two customary themes of the pastoral, the effort at seduction (unsuccessful here) of a shepherdess by a knight, and a slightly idealised portrait of shepherd life and its diversions, the whole bound and made tender by the innocent, simple, and faithful love of Robin and Marion (two consecrated types of the kind). In the mouths of the personages are put fragments of *pastoreles* in fashion and also refrains or verses of another kind, which gave opportunity to mix up song and narrative, and the *Jeu* ends by a *tresque* (farandole) which Robin conducts, all the personages following him. This graceful work seems to have been composed at Naples towards 1280.

Let us quote finally the earliest known farce, which has been preserved by mere chance and which will remain long without a fellow. The *Farce* (Low Latin *farsa*, "farciture") was at first a little interlude played in the pauses of the Mysteries. The one we possess, not complete, was played at

Tournai in 1277: it is the cruelly gay acting of two ill turns played on a blind man by a "lad" who offers to lead him. The blind man, to touch the hearts of folk, sings a song in honour of Charles of Anjou, who was then warring against the partisans of Manfred: curious and remote echo of the political preoccupations of the hour. This fragment makes us deeply deplore that it should be the only one of its kind.

VI. From Philip VI. to Charles VII. (1328–1436).

This period—which we will end at the recovery of Paris by Charles VII.—is entirely dominated by the War of a Hundred Years, whose beginning and nearly whose end it sees. This fatal war stops all the progress of order and civilisation, and surrenders the kingdom to almost continuous disaster and disorder. There are, however, intervals of calm, during which the wounds are healed and the land yields proof of an astonishing vitality, as under Charles V. and during the earlier years of Charles VI. But in the agitation and uncertainties of continual war, waged by undisciplined bands, redoubtable as friends as well as enemies, there is small place left for literary activity. It was only exercised in certain sheltered provinces, in a few towns protected by their walls, at the court of certain princes who, in the midst of general distress, found means to display a magnificence unknown in the preceding ages. Note that Dauphiny and virtually Provence, with other territories, are united to the kingdom, from which, momentarily, the treaty of Brétigny separates all the west and Languedoc, without speaking of Guyenne. For a while the real king of France is king of England, who possesses Paris, where the University is on his side, the French "king of Bourges" being only recognised by a feeble portion of his dominions. The national sentiment is baffled between the pretensions of the kings of France, Navarre, and England, the more so as the duke of Bourgogne, who possesses nearly all the east

and north of France, makes common cause with the king of England. But in spite of all, national feeling is never completely abolished. Charles V. and Du Guesclin strongly reanimated it, and there is hardly any literature in French in favour of the English king. On the contrary, we find among our writers splendid protestations of devotion and patriotic hope: Joan of Arc suffices to prove that old France is not dead. Martial aristocracy is transformed by enrolling itself more and more under the direction of a few great feudatories; the small seigneurial courts of old have disappeared; the only protectors of literature are now kings and princes. In their courts will flourish again a new lyric poetry where, as in the twelfth century, the great lords will pride themselves on rivalling the professionals. Once the war leaves them free to think of something else besides their defence, the north-eastern towns will continue their traditions of burgess poetry, will shelter the last attempts in epic poetry, and will become the home of a dramatic activity to be developed later.

The Latinising religious world falls into decadence, to which the "great schism" contributes; the University of Paris hardly does more than sift the doctrines established in the thirteenth century; Latin poetry has almost ceased to exist in its rhythmic as well as its metrical form (to this epoch belongs, however, the quaint and violent satire against women and marriage of the Boulogner clerk Matheolus). In prose, save a few estimable historical works, nought but compilations are produced. However, a few great names still stand out, such as those of Gerson and Nicholas of Clamenges.

French literature, in these deplorable conditions, could not react against the feebleness it had fallen into from the end of the preceding period; on the contrary, it grew weaker and weaker. One after another, nearly all the *genres* which in the twelfth century had made its reputation and assured it such a marvellous ascendency over neighbouring literatures died out; those it created and developed lacked both the originality and attraction

of the older ones. Thus the influence of French art on other races decreased, without, however, becoming altogether effaced, whereas in Italy sprang up and flourished daily a new art, to which the imitation of antiquity, better known and above all better understood, was to give its essential character, and which was to be the starting-point of all modern literatures. Let us note that authors become more and more "men of letters" in the modern sense of the word; the greater part are clerks, at least in their instruction. There are no more anonymous works, save those whose authors have judged it clever or prudent to conceal their names and the few remnants of the old epic poetry. Writers generally work for kings and princes, and these encourage, according to their taste, gallant or instructive literature. It was principally the latter that flourished, and mostly in the form of translations. We need not point out the numerous translations of Latin works (or even Greek from Latin versions) which were then made, above all under the inspiration of Charles V.: their mere existence constitutes to-day their only interest, which attests the direction of the spirit of the century. It is, in fact, the tendency to instruction which dominates, and we find it working under many various forms.

The epopee, we have seen, already at the end of the thirteenth century was dying out; the fourteenth century saw the end of it. There are still interminable revivals of old songs, or imitations or continuations, but these poems, written with an irritating prolixity and platitude, are but very pale reflections of the ancient splendour. We should note separately a rehandling, composed in Flanders in the middle of the fourteenth century, probably by several authors, of the songs of the first Crusade, with continuations, one of which, *Baudouin of Sebourg*, is a sort of heroi-comic epopee, most amusing in spite of its prolixity, full of gaiety, of fantasy, and of quite a burgess and trivial verve. The poem of *Hugues Capet* is of the same time and almost in the same vein. A rather curious phenomenon is the attempt to give the form of the *chanson de geste* to the recital of contemporary

facts. This was done in the case of the poems on the *Combat des Trente* (1357), on *Bertrand du Guesclin* (by Cuvelier), and in the *Geste des Bourguignons:* this last poem, altogether hostile to France in spirit, happens to be the last production of our old epic poetry; it was composed in Flanders towards 1411.

The Breton romances in verse seem to have come to an end with the thirteenth century. Froissart's *Méliador* is a pure anachronism, and so it was not diffused outside the princely circles for which it was composed. It is a very long, and in general somewhat tiresome work, where the characters specially are of a complete insignificance, but which is rather cleverly composed; a few ingenious inventions, a few brilliant pictures, a monotonous but flowing style render it tolerable reading. The romance is only vaguely connected with the Arthurian cycle. The Breton romance in prose still produced in *Isaïe the Tristeful* (supposed to be the son of Tristan and Iseut) a rather amusing and original work, where, under a quaint disguise, is introduced the little king of fairyland of *Huon of Bordeaux*. The author of the longest prose romance in existence, the *Perceforest*, places the scenes of his narrative in England, but long before Arthur's time, and connects it with the last poems on Alexander. His work, which was composed towards 1330, at the moment the Hundred Years' War broke out, traces an ideal picture of chivalrous society, where magnificence, courtesy, bravery, the spirit of adventure and gallantry are displayed in a quantity of episodes wealthier in decorative detail than in real invention; it seems to have been long in favour with the upper classes; frequently copied in the fifteenth century, in spite of its enormous extent, it was printed in the sixteenth, and has considerably contributed the images that in modern times we fashioned of ancient chivalry.

The romance of adventure in verse is only represented by the very mediocre poem of a Poitevin called Coudrette, *Mélusine;* Coudrette for that matter only abridged in rhyme the prose romance of John of Arras, whose work popularised

this old Celtic legend, connected with the Lusignan family, and was translated into every language. The romance of *Pontus and Sidonie*, possibly due to the Chevalier Landri de la Tour-Landri, is an indirect adaptation of the ancient poem of *Horn*.

As for the *fableaux*, their production has altogether ceased. We only find short narratives resembling them inserted in moral or satirical works, in verse like the traduction, by Jean le Ferre, of the poem of Matheolus, or the *Mirror of Man* of Gower, in prose like the book of the Chevalier de la Tour-Landri, the *Ci nous dit*, etc.

Moral and didactic literature is, indeed, extremely abundant in the fourteenth and in the beginning of the fifteenth centuries, and has produced some really interesting works. The three long poems of the monk William of Digulleville (in Normandy), the *Pilgrimage of Human Life* (written in 1331, remade towards 1350), the *Pilgrimage of the Soul* (1335), the *Pilgrimage of Jesus Christ* (1358), were written, at least the first, to react against the influence of the *Romance of the Rose*, from which the author borrowed its system of personification; while he took his setting from the ancient *Ways of Hell* and *Paradise*. This prolix work had a prolonged success, even out of France, due to its edifying character; but for us it lacks interest, the painting of passions and vices being too general. Much more attractive are the works of the good Tournaisian canon, Gilles the Muisit (middle of the fourteenth century), no less edifying, but full of precise details, and stamped with a charming candour. He was a great admirer of the Reclus of Molliens, whose affected style and strophe of twelve lines with two rhymes fortunately he did not copy. This strophe, on the contrary, was adopted by the Englishman Gower for his poem entitled *The Mirror of Man*, in more than 30,000 lines, where we find a few satirical passages rather interesting, but in general frightfully trite. Gower, who was more fortunate in ballads, and above all in his English works, is the last representative of Anglo-Norman poetry; we should note that his French is only slightly mixed with

Anglo-Normanisms: he certainly learnt or perfected it in France.

These works are chiefly religious; in others it is human morality which dominates, always, however, associated with Christian teachings. The most interesting book of this kind is the *Ménager de Paris*, which a well-meaning burgess wrote as a guide in life for his wife, much younger than he, after his death: along with naïve and touching advice we find an entire little household encyclopedia, most valuable for the history of private life. Of the same class—without the touch of domestic economy—is the book which Landri de la Tour-Landri (in Anjou) wrote towards 1425 for the instruction of his daughters. He gives them advice and cites "examples" whose singular crudity reveals the coarseness which still reigned under the acquired courtesy, and was allied with an utterly ascetic doctrine. It is an extremely instructive book in the knowledge of ancient society.

Works of purely technical teaching scarcely belong to literature; but we ought to remark their more numerous appearance, their greater precision and more abundant details than before, responding to a general need of instruction. Many are translations, but some are drawn from contemporary reality, such as the two great works on the Chase, one of which, *King Modus and Queen Ratio*, is quaintly set in the form of a dream and supplied with useless personifications; the other is the work of one of the greatest princes of the time, Gaston Phébus, count of Foix, who wrote in French, although his native tongue was Gascon. In the same way Honoré Bonet, prior of Salon in the Alps, wrote his treatise on chivalrous war, *Tree of Batailles*, in French and not in Provençal: the intellectual activity of the south, stifled for more than a century, wakes up, accepts the French form, and will soon take an increasingly important place in our literary movement. We must yet cite the *Treatise of Coins* and the book *Des Divinations* of Nicole Oresme, the friend of Charles V., the translator of Aristotle, really scientific works, the first-named being the earliest essay

of political economy we possess, the second being the refutation of foolish astrological beliefs. The *Cookery-book* of Taillevent, the cook of Charles V., which was popular until the seventeenth century, is a much humbler essay, but curious no doubt by its existence and what it teaches us. Finally, for the first time in Northern France is the art of composing verse taught by Eustace Morel, but in a most rudimentary fashion. In the very beginning of our period, at Toulouse, the *gaie science*, burgess heiress of the art of the trobadors, and in which the brave founders of the "Jeux floraux" incorporated grammar, rhetoric, and poetry, has been amply codified. This attempt to maintain and restore the Provençal as a literary language was, however, destined to have but a local and transient success.

Oresme's *Traité des Monnaies* is an essay on political economy. Pure politics are also treated in works not lacking in importance, as the *Apparition of John of Meun* by Honoré Bonet, the *Dreams of the Aged Pilgrim* by Philip of Maisières, destined to give—philosophical stone of numerous alchemists—the means of recovering the Holy Land, the *Songe du Verger*, by an unknown author, in which are discussed with some vigour the respective rights of spiritual and temporal power. We remark in these works, of such a serious character, however, the tyranny of fashion which compels the authors to enclose their ideas in the setting of the *Romance of the Rose*. The great schism, which so profoundly disturbed clerical and University society, produced quite a number of works in prose verse, but of no literary value whatever. It was not so with some of those inspired by the terrible war which ravaged France, or at least with one of them, the *Quadriloge invectif* of Alain Chartier. Even here the author's thought is expressed by the mouth of personifications which appear to him in a dream; but it has nevertheless succeeded in producing itself with energy and a somewhat laborious but often most admirable eloquence. Alain was fed upon study of the Latin prose writers, and he strove to give the amplitude, the gravity, and brilliance he admired in these authors to French

prose. His work breathes of an ardent love of France and a deep commiseration for her sufferings. After a long lamentation from France, Nobility, Clergy, People come in turn with their griefs and exchange mutual reproaches. The discourse of People, victim resigned but at last exhausted by the furies and weaknesses of the two others, contains passages which even to-day excite an emotion we rarely feel in reading authors of this epoch, and the work fully justifies the name "Father of French eloquence," which the sixteenth century bestowed on Chartier.

General satire is represented, amongst others, by the curious work of the monk John Durpain, called, we know not why, the *Book of Mandevie*, where, following the traditional datum, all classes of society are passed in review and criticised, often with a coarse gaiety. Satire on woman was still in favour: John Le Fèvre translated the *Liber infortunii* of Matheolus into French verse clearer than the Latin verse of the original. Eustace Morel died while compiling laboriously his *Mirror of Marriage*, where extremely dull scholastical debates are scantily enlivened here and there by a few pictures of customs. But these attacks provoked response. Le Fèvre himself, frightened by his success, wrote the *Rebours de Matheolus*, and the brave Christine of Pisan directly attacked the *Romance of the Rose*, and composed the *City of Ladies*, where she exposed to women their duties and also their rights.

Lyric poetry of the real Middle Ages, we have said, had nearly died out at the end of the thirteenth century, having only found refuge in a few *puis* of Artesian and Flemish towns. To spring up again, lyric poetry abandoned a part of the very basis which had constituted it of old. Still, however, was love its principal subject—though morals, satire, politics had also a large place—but love was no longer subject to fixed laws: the eternal laments of lovers, and above all the insupportable complaints against slanderers vanished. The form, on the other hand, was completely modified: while the ancient school insisted on the poet's invention, for each several piece, of a strophe constructed in a peculiar fashion,

the new only employed certain conventional forms; all of them (save the *lai*, a long piece of twelve stanzas) were of two stanzas: the *ballade* in three stanzas on the same rhymes with refrain and *envoi* (generally addressed to the *Prince*, that is, the prince or president of the *pui*, which clearly reveals the origin of this form), and the *rondeau*, short piece with certain repeated lines (this traces back to the earlier dancing-songs). We cannot separate from lyric poetry a class of poems of greater extension then in fashion, often in the form of debates, in which subjects of gallantry are usually treated, and where ballades and other lyric pieces are intercalated.

The lyric poetry of this epoch, thus defined and enlarged beyond its ordinary frame, has six principal representatives, which along with history give its chief literary value to the periods: William of Machaut, John Froissart, Eustace Morel, Christine of Pisan, Alain Chartier, Charles of Orleans. We shall touch on each one, mentioning also a few of their works which are not strictly speaking lyrical; but first we must cite the charming *Book of a Hundred Ballads* (towards 1387), in which the author (probably John the Seneschal), after having received contradictory lessons on constancy in love, consults some of the great lords of the time and receives their replies, the whole in ballades. This book, as well as the poetry of the duke Wenceslas of Brabant and of Charles of Orleans, proves that the aristocracy had returned to the fashion of cultivating this kind of poetry, facile and quite superficial.

William of Machaut (+1377) was regarded by all the poets of the school as their master. His ballades, some of which are moral or humorous, are not particularly striking; the influence of the *Romance of the Rose* asserts itself as it does in all this poetry. In the *Judgments* a question in gallantry is propounded after discussion to the judgment of a great personage; it is a sort of prolongation of the ancient *jeu parti*, but where the poet alone exposes both aspects of the question (through the mouth of imaginary characters); they

are fairly long and in octosyllabic lines; we mention them because of their success and wide imitation. But Machaut's most interesting work is his *Voir dit*, in which he relates the liaison he had entered into in old age with a young maid of high degree who fell in love with him on reading his verses: the narrative of his initial enthusiasm and of the final deception, which he accepted with resignation, has a touch of the ridiculous, but also a certain gracefulness; lyric pieces and letters in prose are intercalated, a part of which is attributed to his young friend, but also seems to have been composed by him. Eustace Morel, surnamed des Champs, was a native of Champagne, of low condition, who rose to rather important public office, but whose salary, especially under Charles VI., was often ill paid (inexhaustible subject of complaint); he was the most prolific poet of the epoch. Besides translations in verse, the *Mirror of Marriage*, a long allegorical poem in honour of the King of France, sketches of farces and moralities, we possess more than 1500 ballades by him, without counting lais, rondeaux, virelais, etc. Every imaginable subject is tried in this collection: love poems (often doubtless composed in the name of lords who paid for them), moral, religious, political, hygienic, descriptive, satirical, facetious pieces (obscene even); there are many, cross or humorous, which refer to personal incidents in the author's life, trifling economical and conjugal worries, illnesses, travels, friendships and hostilities, etc. So astonishingly prolific a poet is necessarily unequal; but Eustace is so beyond all description: at times, either in the serious or the jesting tone, he clothes his thought in a vivacious, easy, striking form; but more often he writes an obscure, awkward, heavy style, hampered with an incoherent syntax, and in more than one piece he falls into the lowest degree of platitude and verbiage. In spite of the elevation of more than one of his moral ballades, the delicacy and grace of a few of his love ballades, there is an original fund of trivial grossness in him; also pedantry, a display of vain erudition which manifests itself in allusions often very difficult

to understand or in interminable enumerations, the fashion of which survived him. His poetry, nearly always commonplace, is interesting as being intimately mixed up with the history of his times, and we ought to appreciate his warm patriotism, not discouraged by the clear sight of the vices and follies which ravaged and threatened to ruin the kingdom of France.

John Froissart is, very rightly, more illustrious as a historian than as a poet, and we shall meet with him again in speaking of history (upon his *Méliador*, see above). His ballades and rondeaux are in the style of Machaut's; but his poems, often interspersed with lyrical pieces, the *Buisson de Jeunesse*, the *Épinette Amoureuse*, the *Horloge Amoureuse*, the *Paradis d'Amour*, are of greater interest. In the artificial and allegorical setting imposed by fashion he recalls graceful remembrances of childhood and youth, and expresses amiable sentiments of love. There is gaiety in his dialogising with the greyhound that accompanies him and the horse that bears him on his vagabond course, or with the last florin left in his purse, which reminds him of how its fellows have been squandered (Heine has written something upon a like theme). All this is pleasant, superficial, and light.

Christine of Pisan, like her master Eustace Morel, loved France, though she was but an adopted daughter of it. Having come to Paris with her father, an astrologer and doctor of Bologna sent for by Charles V., having been married at fifteen and a widow at twenty-five, she had to earn her living and that of her children by her work. She had learnt Latin and was also acquainted with the literature of her mother-land: it was she who first quoted Dante in France, and she even imitated him, though feebly. She belongs as well altogether to the school of Machaut and Morel, and had even received advice from the latter. Purely lyrical poetry is only a part of her work, but not the least charming. We must distinguish (it is sometimes difficult), amongst her ballades, between those which express her own sentiments and those which she seems to have composed for others, especially for the great ladies who wished to answer in verse

the madrigals of their "pursuers." In the latter we find subtlety, elegance, and at times a charming grace; in the former there is a sincerity, a simplicity, a melancholy which give them a place apart among all the works of her time, and which are really feminine in the most attractive sense of the word. She has also composed (without speaking here of her scientific poems and her moral prose works) poems in the style of Machaut's *jugements*, and a kind of romantic fiction, the *Pastoure*, where she evidently lends her pen to the loves of a prince and a lady. In spite of the pleasing grace of this allegory, written in seven-syllabled lines, we regret that the extremely honest Christine should have lent herself to this task. She regains our esteem by her political writings, where she attempts, weak woman as she is, to calm the party passion let loose round the unfortunate lunatic seated on the throne, and counts, alas, on the wisdom of Isabeau of Bavière to succeed. This noble soul was undoubtedly dominated by such sentiments as the love of France and an ardent defence of women against their detractors or oppressors. She had the delight of giving both an unhoped-for and triumphal satisfaction in the apparition of Joan of Arc. Christine, then aged sixty-seven (1429) and living in retirement in a convent, expressed her joy and hopes in a last song, which remains the least unworthy inspiration of the Maid of Domremy to the poetry of her times.

The Norman Alain Chartier, as we have seen elsewhere, was also a good patriot, despite the frivolity of much of his work. His last writing (in Latin) was equally inspired by Joan of Arc. Born at Bayeux towards 1392, after having received sound instruction he obtained important offices, but died young (probably in 1429), in full glory, for the whole fifteenth century regarded him as the master of French poetry. He began with amorous debates in the style of Machaut, but in one of them he already aired sentiments of quite another order. The *Book of the Four Ladies* represents four young women comparing their sorrows: the three first have had their lovers killed or taken at the battle of

Azincourt (1415); the lover of the fourth survived, but took flight, and she it is who is held the most deeply to be pitied: the idea is lofty, and may be found again, expressed, needless to say, with more energy and simplicity, in a beautiful poem by the Finlandese Runeberg. On the contrary, the *Belle Dame sans Merci*, which was written in 1426, when France was in the very depths of her woes, is a poem of pure gallantry, whose appearance at such a moment, in the sorry court of Charles VII. at Issoudun, is less surprising than the effect it produced: upon the question of deciding whether ladies should or should not pity poor lovers, an entire literature was produced and lasted long, and the form of Alain's poem was adopted by nearly all poets during several generations. This form, which he had already employed in other debates of the kind, inspired by Machaut, was that of the stanza of eight octosyllabic lines with three rhymes, the second rhyme returning four times. His *Bréviaire des Nobles* written in ballades, is more serious, and was regarded as the code of education for young gentlemen. Alain Chartier has not put into his verse the Latinised eloquence of his prose; but its facile grace, its elegiac sweetness, the felicitous choice of a new rhythm, explain its success, and, helped by the admiration excited by his prose, maintained him, until the Pleiad, in the first rank among poets as among French "orators."

Of all these rhymers of ballades, rondeaux, debates, and sayings, the only one posterity still reads is the last we have to speak of, Charles of Orleans. We rank him here, though he lived until 1465, because his first collection belongs to this period, and the poet belongs to it entirely by inspiration and by form. He does not even depend upon Alain Chartier, but is connected rather with Machaut and the *Cent Ballades*. The *Book of the Prison* (written in England during his long captivity, 1411–1440) recalls the poems of Machaut and Froissart. It is a sort of amorous autobiography, interspersed with ballades and rondeaux. Freed at last and returned to France at peace, he continued in his little court of Blois to write poetry, inviting great lords and

professional poets to collaborate with him. The collection of all he wrote and made others write forms a rich album where by far the best work is the master's. His versification is always easy, his language facile, light, and coloured like a butterfly's wing. In an eminently artificial style he finds the means of being natural; he is charmingly affected without being, in the ordinary sense of the word, finical. He has real wit, rare enough then, but above all he possesses in quite an extraordinary degree the gift of invention in detail. Following the example of the *Romance of the Rose*, the poet, like Froissart and many others, personifies his sentiments—Desire, Hope, "ce beau menteur plein de promesses," Care, Melancholy, Love, Listlessness, Reason—and turns them into little genii who play, chase each other, and fight upon the dainty stage of his soul. Elsewhere his heart, his thoughts, his eyes, his ears are also distinct personages, who have their interests, their points of view, their discords, and their reconciliations. All these actors don the most varied and most unexpected disguises in an incomparable fertility of metamorphoses. The greater part of these little scenes are dedicated to an imprecise gallantry, but there are pieces connected with real and personal facts (and some, especially in the *Book of the Prison*, are full of charming malice and good-humour); there are others also purely descriptive; in regard to these the poet's depth of sentiment for nature has been greatly exaggerated: he limits himself to celebration of the commonplaces of spring, or he uses the same means which had served him to typify his feelings. We must also mention his patriotic poetry, which is sincerely felt, though he is less at home in the lofty style. By his witty and smiling imagination, the delicacy of his thought, his listless irony, the ground of mild melancholy across which race the arabesques of his fancy, Charles of Orleans is the most charming representative Society poetry has ever had.

With history we emerge from the artificial atmosphere in which nearly all this poetry moves. History in verse is still slightly cultivated, and we should note that Froissart first

wrote in verse the opening book of his chronicle. Notwithstanding this class has produced little. The real centre of historical production of this epoch was the Walloon country, especially Liège. Here it was that John of the Prés (or d'Outremeuse) compiled his immense *Mer des Histoires*, where he has reduced into dialectical prose all the chronicles and all the songs of geste he knew, and which was continued later on by John of Stavelot. At Liège also was composed, by a collaboration whose details still remain obscure, the principal participant being a doctor called John of Burgundy, but John of the Prés being also mixed up with it, a singular work, geographical rather than historical, but over-all fabulous, where the adventurous voyages of the English knight, John of Mandeville, are supposed to be related. John of Mandeville, who stayed at Liège in due time, and was taken care of by John of Burgundy, had really travelled; but his reminiscences only seem to have supplied the book with a few features, fabricated as it was from anterior texts of all sources, and largely completed by imagination. It is a fabulous pendant to the book of Marco Polo, and which had more success than it, and which even to-day has admirers; here we remark alongside of impossible stories curious observations and ideas often bold.

To real history, on the contrary, belongs the book of John le Bel, canon of Liège, where he relates the events that happened in his time (1329–1361) in England and in France. John le Bel was a rich and powerful personage, the friend of great lords, having taken part in events and being able to obtain information. He endeavoured to know exactly at first hand what he wished to relate, and he has related it in a firm, personal, somewhat rough style, too much scattered with Liégeois idioms, but with a solidity and depth of judgment not yet seen in mediæval historiography. Another canon of Liège, John of Hemricourt (+1403), also wrote history, but in limiting it nearly to that of his native land. He deserves to be mentioned because of his pompous but often singularly picturesque language, which reminds us

of the stained glass, overloaded with colour, of Flemish art in the fifteenth century.

John Froissart was the real successor of John le Bel; born at Valenciennes in 1338, he died towards 1405. Nature had endowed him with a gay and romantic turn of mind, an insatiable curiosity, a faithful memory, an uncommon gift of vision, and the faculty of making others see what he saw. He began with poetry, which he never ceased to cultivate, and, still quite young, he wrote in verse an account of the principal events since 1356, which in 1362 he offered it to Philippa of Hainault, wife of Edward III., who belonged to the family of his lords. She received him well, appreciated his work, and encouraged him to continue it. After the queen's death (1369), he returned to his country, and soon found other protectors, who were all interested in his work, and gave him the means of pursuing it. Fortunately he soon discovered the error he had committed in adopting the rhymed form, and recast his earlier work in prose, carrying it down to about 1370. Later it was incorporated into the "First Book" of the *Chronicles*. In preparing this revision Froissart was acquainted with John le Bel's work, which permitted him to go back as far as 1326, and relate the origin of the war between the kings of France and England, become the essential matter of his history. He treated his predecessor freely enough, transcribing long pages almost textually (many of the most admired passages, like the account of the siege of Calais, are thus copied), and on the other hand suppressing or attenuating whatever in the free and rough account of the canon of Liège might shock the English court. This first book, longer than the other three together, was rehandled a first time, Froissart having changed protector, in a sense favourable to France, and a second time, to efface as far as possible the too direct borrowings from John le Bel. The second book, written towards 1387, contains the narrative of events down to 1385; the third book, written in 1390, brings them down almost to this year; the fourth was to have brought them to the end of the century. Froissart,

become canon of Chimai, died probably towards 1405 without having given the last touches to this book. The *Chronicles* of Froissart resemble an immense tapestry which shows, in unfolding its successive squares, the whole agitated, adventurous, variegated, bloodstained, and splendid life of this long period of incessant war, civil and foreign, of rebellions, treasons, massacres, pillages, battles and sieges, and hardy "emprises." The author boasts—and this is a very characteristic sign of the new times—of being, not a simple "chronicler," but a "historian," of not limiting himself to the relation of facts according as they occurred, but of searching out their origin and of distinguishing their causes: these are principally the characters of men and peoples. In this design, where John le Bel had set him the example, he often admirably succeeded; but he is under illusion when he wants to discover and explain the profound causes of events (for example, social and economical causes). He is much more an eye that sees, an ear that hears, than a brain that reflects. But what an eye and what an ear! All the spectacles which have caught his glance live again before us, the personages in their attitudes and gestures, the crowds in their massed or tumultuous movements. All the accounts he avidly solicits, and which are brought him from all sides, he tells over again so naturally that we seem to hear the narrator's voice: his work in many parts is but a mosaic made up of these narratives from thousands of sources. At heart indifferent to the successes or reverses of the parties in strife (except that he is violently opposed to Louis of Orleans and his followers), he is only interested in the events for themselves, chiefly in adventures, in "marvels," in fine displays of prowess, and also in trickery, or in striking vicissitudes of fortune. The sole deep-seated inspiration we can distinguish in his work is his aristocratic partiality, his contempt of the mob, and his admiration of that seigneurial class to which he belonged as client. His ethics are slack, and may be essentially reduced to appreciation of warlike qualities; amongst so many tales of disaster and cruelty, his

sensibility is only aroused in presence of too revolting excesses. "This clerk," it has been justly said, "has written history as a herald of arms might have related it." We might also say, if the anachronism were permissible, that he is the king of "reporters." Like a true reporter, he repeats what is said to him, but he adorns it when necessary for the sake of interest; he is careless regarding chronology and exact geography, and he has no scruple in collecting or even inventing features or episodes that will make his narrative more picturesque or dramatic. Such as it is, his book is a mirror where his epoch would recognise itself, and take pleasure in the contemplation, and where we see it pass before us with all its colour and movement. The historian can only utilise it with considerable precaution, but it is the most precious of auxiliaries for the painter of customs, for whoever would delight in reviving a vanished world by retrospective imagination.

In perfect contrast with the historic work of Froissart is that of the wise Christine of Pisan. Her *Life of Charles V.* is hardly original, being drawn mostly from Latin sources; but her *Life of Bouciquaut* is a valuable model of biography (somewhat flattered) of one of the great men of the fourteenth century.

During the time of the first four Valois, the theatre has left us few monuments, and none whose value is comparable with those of the preceding period. However, an important fact took place in the evolution of the mysteries, but we have no means of studying it directly. Until then, with rare exception, only the birth and resurrection of Christ had been taken from the gospels, and not Christ Himself, but witnesses of these two great miraculous events, appeared on the stage. Towards the middle of the fourteenth century, it seems, and we may believe under the influence of confraternities sprung up in Italy from the Franciscan impulsion, "confraternities of the Passion" were formed which represented the Passion itself, and consequently made Christ act and speak, then little by little went further back into His life, and

unfolded its chief episodes. A *Passion* in Provençal almost of this epoch belongs apparently to one of these confraternities. The most renowned was that of Paris, whose existence is attested as early as 1380, and which in 1402 obtained the privilege of giving his representations in a permanent theatre. There is every probability that the pieces relating to the Passion and Resurrection which have been preserved in a Paris manuscript of the fifteenth century belong to the repertory of the confraternity: they are very feeble and vulgar. As early as the first quarter of the fifteenth century, at Arras, Eustace Mercadé had rhymed a *Redemption* in 25,000 lines and a *Vengeance of Jesus Christ*.

We have also two pieces in honour of St. Denis and St. Genevieve, the two patron saints of Paris; but these are not "miracles" in the ancient sense: they are lives of saints by personages, a kind which also developed in the confraternities and which abounded in the next period. On the contrary, to the ancient class belong (save a short *Nativity*) the Forty *Miracles of Notre Dame* played by the members of a confraternity, no doubt Parisian, at the end of the fourteenth century, and the collection of which has been preserved. These are small pieces of no poetic value, but interesting by their simplicity and the naïve representation of the life of the time. The subjects are borrowed from legends of all sources, and often the Virgin has been introduced into a narrative in which she played no part whatever, or has been substituted for other saints. A miracle of *Saint Nicolas* is connected altogether with this class, as well as a play of *Griseldis* (1395), remarkable for a certain freedom of manner and because a profane story (we know it is taken from Boccaccio) is the subject. The resignation of Griseldis—which inspires us with very different sentiments from those with which it was regarded in the Middle Ages—is, to be true, of an eminently Christian character.

The really profane theatre, that is comedy, is still less represented, though it was certainly not unknown at this epoch. We hardly find more than an ill-constructed, badly-

written farce by Eustace Morel, *Maître Trubert* (there are some rather curious gambling scenes), and by the same writer a dialogue where the four "offices" of the king's household, personified according to the custom (*Paneterie*, *Échansonnerie*, *Cuisine*, and *Saucerie*), exchange boasts and insults: it is dull and coarse, and its sole interest lies in the fact that for the first time we find on the stage (no doubt a private stage in the commons of the royal palace) the personification whose use later will constitute the class "moralities."

VII. From Charles VII. to Charles VIII. (1436–1498).

The fifteenth century, the first third part of which had been so fatal for the kingdom, was in the middle, in spite of continued strife, disorder, and misery, an epoch of comparative peace. Prosperity throve so increasingly that towards the end of this period France, healed of her wounds and once more put into possession of her forces, undertook a policy of expansion and conquest. The wars of Italy, inaugurated by Charles VIII., form the close of the literary as well as the political and social Middle Ages. France is now to become acquainted with the art and literature of the Italian Renaissance. The printing-press begins to give a publicity to books in the popular tongue which hitherto they had not known, and consequently changes the conditions under which they are produced. Humanism destroys the old scholastics and casts mediæval Latin into the state of a dead language; already more than one symptom announces the movement of the Reformation. And therefore will we end the present sketch with the first expedition in which our armies crossed the Alps, led by the adventurous heir of the prudent Louis XI.

The fifteenth century had prepared the modern epoch by the slow destruction of mediæval society. Feudalism lost a large share of the place it had occupied and which royalty deprived it. With the dukes of Burgundy, Brittany,

Anjou, and Orleans had vanished the greater part of the representatives of this aristocracy, partly of royal origin, but which was often opposed to royalty and greatly limited its power and freedom of movement. The struggle against England had ended, and the common efforts which the various provinces had displayed in it strengthened the unity of the kingdom. Everything tended towards the reinforcement of this unity: relations became easier and more frequent, juridical customs began to unify as the monies had done; royal jurisdiction more and more bent private justice before its power. Paris, although the kings rarely dwelt there, grew incessantly and became the uncontested centre and home of national life. The language of Paris was henceforth the only one authors who wished to have a public could use. If a purely Burgundian literature still existed until the death of Charles the Bold (1476), and even continued a little while longer in that part of the domain which had passed over to the House of Austria, it generally employed the same language as that of purely French literature. The south only cultivated its dialectical poetry as a curiosity: the southerners who took to writing used French, as they had begun to do in the preceding period, and one of the most remarkable writers of the time was a Provençal. Thus was prepared the advent of a common literary tongue, ruled by grammar (which had seemed reserved to the Latin), and by the usage of court and town, that is Paris.

If we cast a general glance on the literary production of this period, we find at first many features which characterised the preceding period: complete absence of epic poetry, abundant production of an utterly conventional love poetry, and a didactic and satirical poetry of slight importance. But an activity unknown in the anterior epoch is manifested in diverse paths. Historiography in prose, as much on the Burgundian as on the French side, is produced with amplitude, and finds in Chastellain and Commines representatives of the highest rank. Thanks chiefly to Antoine de la Sale, prose triumphs in romance, tale and satire; personal poetry makes a brilliant

appearance in Villon's *Testament;* religious drama, under the form of the great mysteries, if it does not succeed in producing works of real literary value, at least reaches a development, an exterior splendour, and an importance in national life it had not yet attained and will never have again; finally, farces and all of a like kind pullulate on all sides and give at once their best specimens. In a word, there is progress in several directions, there is a wealth of expansion in a few, and a veritable fecundity, principally during the thirty years which follow the middle of this century, succeeds to the sterility of the preceding age. This fecundity, it is true, slackens towards the end of the century, and will only be met with later on under the first impulsion of the Renaissance. We will rapidly develop each of the points we have just indicated.

The production of the *chansons de geste*, we have seen, had completely ceased; as for the early ones, if here and there they are copied out, no one sings them more. But from about 1430 several of them are put into prose, not for the people, which does not read, but for the great lords. Stripped thus of the discouraging and prolix form they had taken in the last rhymed redactions, they obtained a new lease of favour to which we owe the fact that ten of them, in the early days of printing, were published in sumptuous editions, and afterwards, in coarser and more imperfect reproductions, supplied the people with reading only renounced by it in our own days and not yet renounced by the people of other countries. Such was the vitality of these old heroic tales.

The cycle of the Table Round had, as early as the beginning of the thirteenth century, produced the first romances in prose written in a European tongue. We have seen that the fourteenth century had increased the number. The fifteenth produced nothing new in this line and was content to freshen up, in copying them, the old narratives. A few romances in verse were also put into prose, like the *Perceval*, which were printed in the sixteenth century.

But the period which engages our attention, in its second

part, saw the birth of romances in prose which are connected more or less vaguely with the *matière de France*, but which are rather romances of adventure, and of which two at least are of real value, *John of Saintré* and *John of Paris*.

John of Saintré is one of the principal works of Antoine de la Sale, a man whose literary activity was exercised in many directions. No one in the fifteenth century has handled French more dexterously, more copiously, or with such impulsive verve as this Provençal. No one has more closely observed middle-class life than this guest and protégé of great lords; no one has been more cynically "Gaulois" than this wise preceptor of princes. And these are not the only peculiarities that strike us in him. Born in 1388, having spent his youth in military expeditions and voyages (principally in Italy, where he became acquainted with the new art formed there), he begun his career as a writer at fifty-two with works of a didactic and somewhat dull character, as behoved a pedagogue: *La Salade* (so called with allusion to the author's name, because he had put into it "all sorts of good herbs"), *La Salle* (another pun), and shorter little works, where he dissertates heavily enough on the qualities an accomplished lord should possess. However, he inserts interesting digressions, such as the tale of the *Paradise of Queen Sibille*, reminiscence of a voyage in the Apennines, where he learnt and brightly records a marvellous legend resembling that of the Tannhäuser, or a satirical chapter on marriage, a foretaste of one of those masterpieces he was still to write. It was at about seventy years of age that he revealed himself as a painter of customs and an author of the first rank, first by the *Fifteen Joys of Marriage*, then by the *Little John of Saintré*, finally by the *Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles* (finished in 1462). We will here examine only the romance.

John of Saintré displays the genius of Antoine de la Sale in its double aspect. One part of the work seems to mock the other. The first shows us—not without a malice and sensuality rendered more piquant by an air of naïve innocence—the lesson of all the ennobling virtues given to a chivalrous Chéru-

bin by an elected "godmother"; the second forms a strange contrast with it. To be worthy of her he loves ingenuously, Saintré goes off to the wars in Prussia, and accomplishes feats as wonderful as those of the most adventurous songs of geste. When he returns to France, he finds his fair, a very great lady, in the power of a fat and wealthy abbé whose seductions are of quite a material order; he avenges himself on both in a rather brutal fashion, and the beautiful dream of the start ends in a disenchanted realism. It is the ideal of the Middle Ages giving way: Louis XI., whom Antoine de la Sale knew personally, must have found the book to his taste.

It is worth while remarking that other romances in good French prose have also been written by authors of southern origin. The earliest, *Paris and Vienna*, by a Marseillais called Pierre de la Sippade, is supposed to be translated from the Catalan, but this is perhaps a mere fiction. The second, *Peter of Provence and the fair Maguelonne* (1457), the redaction of an Oriental tale which had already been worked into earlier romances of adventure, is a narrative full of grace and charm, and which deserved the very great success it obtained and maintained for long in France and abroad. The little romance of *Palanus, Count of Lyons*, was written at Lyons at the end of the fifteenth century or the beginning of the sixteenth: it is a version of a very remote theme (the queen unjustly accused and defended by a *preux chevalier*); it is remarkable for the quite ideal purity of its conception: love inspired and obtained by virtue, such as was dreamed of frequently in the Middle Ages, was never described with greater delicacy.

John of Paris is purely French, and no doubt Parisian; it is a charming little piece whose pleasing and swaggering patriotism recalls the inspiration of the *Pilgrimage of Charlemagne* in the eleventh century. The foundation of the tale is borrowed from the romance of Beaumanoir, *John and Blonde*, where already a Frenchman full of wit makes fun of an English lord and carries off his betrothed. Here it is the king of England himself who is mystified and supplanted by the

king of France in person disguised under the name of a simple burgess of Paris. The mirific description of the procession with which John of Paris makes his entrance into Burgos is also the revival of a theme to be found in the songs of geste ; but here the theme is transformed in the most ingenious fashion, and the *Thousand and One Nights* has nothing more delightful than the cleverly varied picture of this interminable roll of splendours, each one of which the astounded spectator always believes to be the last, until at length Jean of Paris himself appears, both simple and gorgeous, with a white wand in his hand. No doubt this little romance contains a distant allusion to the marriage of Charles VIII. and Anne of Brittany in 1492, which permits us to assign it to the extreme end of this period.

It is also to Antoine de la Sale that we owe the introduction into France of the short tale in prose, which flourished in Italy since Boccaccio. He had read the *Decameron*, and wanted to imitate it in French ; but it befell him as too many other readers of this most varied book : he chiefly remembered the indecent tales, which, however, form but a small part of it. He has hardly included any others in his collection, and he greatly surpassed the licence of the original. Insignificant in matter, the *Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles* are redeemed by the form : besides a too evident delight in lewd details, we may complain of a prolixity often trending on redundance ; but, save for this defect, the language is excellent, full-flavoured, luxurious, and often steeped in grace and ingenuity. It is a singularly clever reproduction, in its apparent negligence, of the spoken language of the day, and as such of great charm and interest. This is not the only merit of these tales : the characters are traced with amusing precision, and we find here that malicious good-humour which has remained one of the inimitable characteristics of the really French story-tellers.

The historians, in the reigns of Charles VII. and Louis XI., were divided into two groups, according as they belonged to the French or Burgundian party. Those of the latter are both more numerous and more interesting. The most remark-

able of all, Philip of Commines, belonged successively to both groups. On the French side we hardly find any but chronicles of no literary value. On the Burgundian side we find, first, Monstrelet, the continuator of Froissart until 1444, at times worthy of his model; then Olivier de la Marche, recognised and complaisant painter of the somewhat artificial splendours of the Burgundian court; and finally and principally Georges Chastellain, who, as historian as well as poet, dominates his entire epoch. Of Flemish origin, after a youth given up to travel, he returned in 1435 to the court of Philippe le Bon, who in 1455 allotted him the functions of *indiciaire*, that is court historiographer. In spite of this official tie, Chastellain has preserved in his chronicle (14...-1474), of which unfortunately we only possess some portions, an independent view of things, a wide horizon and an impartial judgment. If he treats Louis XI. severely, describing him in a celebrated phrase as "the great spider weaving his web in the middle of the Christian world," it is not through hatred of France; he has nobly defended himself from reproaches in this sense cast at him in Paris. He wrote with heaviness and emphasis, and his pompous phrases, where he carries farther than even Alain Chartier the imitation of long Ciceronian periods, are often entangled in their carefully-prepared folds; but he also reaches real eloquence. He judges events and men with elevation and at times with depth; his work, if it were entire, would no doubt be the most important historical monument which the Middle Ages has left us. His contemporaries had reason to admire him; they honoured the historian and the poet, who willingly called himself and was usually called by the simple name of "Georges." He died in 1475, just in time not to see the fall of that House of Burgundy to which so many ties attached him.[1]

[1] The *Life of Jacques de Lalaing*, a distinguished Burgundian Knight, which was often attributed to him, has been recently proved to be the work of Antoine de la Sale, who imitated in this biography Christine's *Life of Bouciquaut*, and inserted in it, oddly enough, most of the moral lessons he had put into the mouth of the fair lady of *Jehan de Saintré*.

Philip of Commines has been justly considered as the first of modern historians. He seeks to understand the political reasons of the facts he relates, and to penetrate the connection of the character of the directing personages with the events they create or in which they are mixed up. Although he is still faithful to the religious ideas of the Middle Ages, and admits a certain intervention of Providence in human affairs, he judges them above all from the practical point of view, and for him, as for his contemporary Machiavelli, success is the great measure of approbation and blame. And so, born a subject of the duke of Burgundy, and at first attached to the service of Charles the Bold, he left this adventurous and break-neck policy to take service under Louis XI., whose wisdom and deep calculations he admired. All in serving the king's designs, he seized every means of amassing a great fortune, which later on he had to defend, as well as his life and liberty, against the rancours he had gathered round him. He was restored to favour under Charles VIII., but was left aside by Louis XII., and died in 1511 in his castle of Argentan. Unlike all the preceding historians, Commines was not a clerk. He wrote his Memoirs to note down for the use of statesmen what he found interesting from the political point of view during his long career. He wrote badly, without precision or relief, and his sentences are awkwardly constructed without any of the attraction we find in the negligent and almost spoken style of Joinville. But he abounds in ideas, in observation and subtle psychological analyses, and the portrait of Louis XI., which we cannot say he has traced, but the elements of which he has supplied in his scattered remarks, is that which posterity has adopted and preserved. His book has no artistic value, but an incomparable documentary one.

The poetry of the fifteenth century is nearly altogether impregnated with morality. It is almost exclusively so in works which are frequently connected with history by their political side. Such are above all those of Georges Chastellain, pieces of actuality where we often meet with the echo of its chronicle, pieces of pure philosophical and moral reflec-

tion. These poems, which for us to-day have no considerable attraction, are none the less worthy of mention because of the great, though in truth very unequal, talent the author has displayed in some of them. We find pieces of a loftiness of conception and a brilliance of expression hitherto unknown in French, and which we shall not meet with again before Ronsard; the verse is at times ample, harmonious, and sonorous, like the finest verse of the modern epoch. Unfortunately, besides these beautiful odes, or even in the greater part of them, we too often alight upon the bombast, the pomposity, and the pretentious puerility, which already characterised, and which were yet more to characterise, the Burgundian school, imitated in France by Cretin, John Marot, etc. John Meschinot, a Breton poet, in his *Spectacles of Princes*, endeavours to give a manual of morals and politics to the governing class; he had an immense success, which we find hard to understand, for his style is both dull and elaborate, and his ideas are quite common; he only interests us in the passages where he talks of himself and relates the miseries of his youth in a picturesque and touching fashion. Didactic works also, of value only to the archæologist, are *The Deliberate Knight* and the *Triumph of the Ladies* of the kindly Oliver of the Marche, who traces for men and women of the world the picture of virtues which should endear them to God and to society, employing the allegories and symbols in fashion.

The Ladies' Champion of Martin le Franc, one of the most important works of the fifteenth century, should also be included in moral poetry. Born in the county of Aumale in Normandy, towards 1410, and consequently a subject of the king of France, this writer always cherished the sentiments inspired by his origin, though his life was nearly altogether spent out of his country. He dedicated his great poem to Philip the Good, become the somewhat uncertain friend of the king of France, but afterwards to Charles VII. his *Estrif de Fortune et de Vertu*, a long treatise in prose without originality. He became provost of the

chapter of Lausanne, took an active part at the Council of Bâle, fulfilled diplomatic missions for the duke of Savoy, was commendatory abbé of Novalese in Piedmont, and died at Rome in 1461, invested in high dignities. *The Ladies' Champion*, work of his youth (1442), is a singular book, where the new spirit often manifests itself with independence and vigour in the trammels of an altogether mediæval form, and with numerous remains of the elder inspiration. The tiresome setting of a debate between Free-Will, who defends women, and Evil Mouth, who attacks them, forms an undigested mass of ideas, often hardy, and of recollections of all sorts. Martin combats John of Meun, and resembles him in his confused erudition and cynical triviality, but sometimes he rises far above the latter, whose influence he is under more than he admits or believes. This long special pleading, *pro et contra*, where all the trite commonplaces on this subject, already so much discussed, are gathered, concludes with the enthusiastic proclamation of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception, vainly attacked by Evil Mouth, here the mouthpiece of the Dominicans. Along with this the author loudly affirms his faith in progress, quotes *the Florentine poet Dante*, denounces superstition, astrology, and belief in sorcery, and courageously tells the truth even to those whose favour he seeks. The court of Burgundy little relished his book, against which it brought the charge of "Basilien" sentiments (favourable to the Gallican tendencies of the Council of Bâle), and Martin defended it in a most remarkable little poem, where the dignity and independence of the man of letters are asserted in a language which had not yet been heard and was to be heard only at very rare intervals for centuries to come. Le Franc's style, too often lagging and dull, is frequently of an extraordinary felicity and clearness, especially when he employs it to express personal thoughts which hurried through his mind; he then attains, especially in his patriotic effusions, eloquence and real poetry.

The moral and allegorical elements were, since the books of John of Meun and Alain Chartier, intimately mingled with

love poetry. It was the fashion to consecrate poems, under the form of visions and debates, to the discussion of questions of gallant casuistry. The school of Alain Chartier was continued in a group of minor poets, also linked with Charles of Orleans, whose activity as poet and the protector of poets was prolonged during a good part of this period (he died in 1465). The proceedings instituted against Alain Chartier's *Belle Dame sans Merci* on its appearance continued for some time, and produced a whole literature of erotic jurisprudence, whose ultimate production was the celebrated book in prose of the *Arrêts d'Amour* of the Parisian Martial d'Auvergne (+ 1508), which has contributed to form the erudite legend of the imaginary "courts of love." All this literature is mere sport. The authors make gentle fun of the lovers they put on the stage, especially Martial, whose actors are not noble knights and great ladies, but young lads and girls of the Parisian middle class, playing at love rather than suffering from it. The same has written, always in this slightly ironical key, but with a dainty grace not without charm, some short love poems, the last of which is the *Amant rendu Cordelier à l'observance d'Amour*. He has also written (without mentioning a long poem in honour of Charles VII.) a religious poem, the *Praises of Our Lady*, where he thanks the Virgin for having cured him of a mental disease. Speaking of this, let us quote from the thousand little poems inspired then by the religious sentiment, the singular productions of Pierre of Nesson, whose piety takes almost a burlesque form, more capable of scandalising than edifying.

There can be no question of enumerating here the mass of little descriptive, satirical, facetious poems which were produced at this epoch and which amateurs have collected. Its poetry, characteristically lyric, is very poor; young nobles still amuse themselves in composing ballades and rondeaux of their fair, but all this is colourless, feeble, and trite. It is the blanched verdure of a bygone spring without a morrow. Much more interesting is the personal poetry, sprung, so to

say, fortuitously, and destined to end in the poetical work of François Villon. We will pass over a few anterior essays to pause before the grand work.

François of Montcorbier, born in Paris, 1431, of a poor family, orphaned of his father in infancy, brought up on the charity of a protector, the canon William of Villon, whose name he took, forsook serious study, after having gained the unimportant rank of master in arts, and flung himself into the path of dissipation, debauch, even crime. Banished in 1455 for murder, not wholly inexcusable, pardoned soon after, he took part at the end of 1456 in a big robbery, left Paris shortly afterwards, and wandered about France during five years as a vagabond, fugitively taken up by Charles of Orleans and the Duke of Bourbon. In the summer of 1461 we meet him imprisoned at Meun-sur-Loire for some fresh misdeed. Pardoned by the new king, Louis XI., on the occasion of his visit to Meun, he was again arrested for theft in 1462, released for want of proofs, mixed up a few days later in a murderous scuffle, and this time condemned to be hanged. He appealed to Parliament, which commuted the sentence to ten years' banishment, and left Paris in the beginning of 1463. He was hardly thirty-two, but he was not destined to survive long: according to Rabelais, who seems to have gathered an authentic tradition on the spot, he ended his days in Poitou. His works were printed at the latest in 1489, and were frequently reprinted until 1533, when Clément Marot published an improved edition which revived their success; they were then almost forgotten during two hundred years, and to-day have met with a favour which is proved by the number of editions they have gone through and the works of which they, as well as the poet's life, have been and still are the subject.

Villon started by a few ballades which won him renown among the scholars, and wrote in early youth a burlesque account in prose of the troubles that had disturbed the University in 1451 and 1452. Towards Christmas, 1456, preparing to leave Paris for Angers, he amused himself with com-

posing a little poem which he called *Legacies*, and which he cast in the shape of one of those "testaments de voyage" at that time frequent enough, and where, in the form of facetious legacies, he introduces a number of his friends and acquaintances, belonging to divers ranks of Parisian society, from high dignitaries to professional thieves. During his wandering life he composed a few ballades, and in his prison of Meun wrote three, one of which is very beautiful, where he began to put his own life and heart into his verses. Once out of prison and restored to Paris, he wrote his *Testament*, where he develops the idea of his first poem: supposing himself this time at death's door, he makes a sort of general confession, speaks of his loves, of his misfortunes, of his frailties and remorse, expresses with emotion his gratitude to his mother, to his protector, to the king who freed him, then, taking up and enlarging extraordinarily the frame of the *Legacies*, he introduces into it, with all sorts of pleasantries and caricatures, his sentiments and reflections on life and death, on love and religion, on all that passes through his head and his heart. A perpetual and sudden change of tone in this work, infinitely varied despite its short dimensions, constitutes Villon the first and perhaps the best of our humorists. He displays a faculty for keen observation, an altogether plastic gift of description, a sparkling malice and a light gaiety which charms all the more in alternating incessantly with a pathetic gravity. The attraction and the variety are increased by the insertion of numerous ballades, composed some before the poem, and others expressly for incorporation in it; the most renowned is that of the *Ladies of olden time*, where the poet renews in an original fashion the well-worn theme of the fragility of human life, and whose delightful refrain (*Mais où sont les neiges d'antan?*) was at once, and has remained, in all memories. Like the *Legacies*, the *Testament* is written in eight-lined stanzas of three rhymes, a form adopted by Alain Chartier, Martin le Franc, Martial d'Auvergne, and in general in all the poetry of the fifteenth century. Villon handles it with a consummate art, and his language, at

times a little harsh, and awkward when he wants to construct long phrases, is often full of force or grace. His *Testament* placed him in the first rank of poets of his day. As we have seen, once returned to Paris, he quickly fell back into his worst errors, in spite of the good resolutions he seems to have formed sincerely. In 1462 he composed for the "Coquillards" (a kind of "camorrists," to whom he was affiliated), ballades in their slang where he shows scarcely any trace of his talent, and which have only a philological interest. When he thought he was going to end his days at the gallows, he composed his celebrated ballade of the *Pendus*, where the expression of the sincerest repentance mingles with the vision, of a striking realism, which he traces of his own skeleton hanging with others from the sinister gibbet. Pardoned by Parliament, he wrote another joyous ballade, then a humble one addressed to the sovereign court, and then went into exile. If we should believe Rabelais, he composed in his retreat a *Passion* in the Poitevin tongue, but it has never reached us.

Villon had imitators who equalled him neither in sincerity nor talent, but some of whom, like Henri Baude, have left interesting works. Among those who imitated his style rather than his peculiar manner, we may mention William Coquillart, who later on became a grave and important personage, an official of the church of Rheims (+1520), who, while he was a student of canon law in Paris (1472–73), composed facetious poems where, dropping into burlesque, he resumes the themes of gallant jurisprudence brought into fashion by Martial d'Auvergne; his *Pleading of the Simple and the Sly*, and especially his *Droits Nouveaux*, are works of an abounding and superficial verve, of an astonishing verbal wealth, of a somewhat laboured gaiety, which had great success, and tempted many an imitator. Let us also cite the immense satirical work of Eloi d'Amerval, the *Grande Diablerie*, where Villon's influence is recognisable, but which is only a curiosity.

The theatre in the fifteenth century holds a considerable place in national life, and demands a corresponding one in

this picture, though its interest, strictly speaking, is for the greater part more social than literary. We have seen in the preceding chapter how it had formed, in certain towns, probably in imitation of the Italian confraternities, confraternities of artisans and burgesses, who, under the direction of the clergy, which devoted themselves to the representation of "mysteries," and in the beginning especially of the Passion, the Resurrection, and the Incarnation. Other confraternities, placed under the invocation of a saint, and whose existence might generally be traced further back, represented either a "miracle" or, more rarely in the earlier period, the entire life of their patron. These two forms of religious drama took, in this period, a hitherto unknown amplitude and wealth, and until the middle of the sixteenth century delighted all classes of the population. It has been said more than once that the mysteries (the very lives of saints, the episodes of Biblical history, and even profane dramas came to be so called) were for the fifteenth century what the *chansons de geste* had been for the early Middle Ages; but they had the great disadvantage over the latter of not having sprung spontaneously from national inspiration, of being drawn from Latin sources, of being submitted to the control of the Church, and, in consequence, of lacking freedom as well as originality. Their principal aim, besides, was edification, to which was added for the people entertainment in the form of the comic element, vulgar and often even gross. The mysteries had not what is properly called a *dramatic* character. They were composed, not to represent the characters and passions of men in strife amongst themselves or against events, but to remind or make the spectators acquainted with the more or less authentic history which formed the subject. It is one way of conceiving theatrical representation, and at any rate we find it in the historical plays of Shakespeare, and in many Spanish *comedias*. But it does not lend itself to the class of creation which to-day seems to us the only real dramatic one, in which the poet freely invents the personages as well as the facts of the action whose idea he has conceived, or where, if

he borrows them from history or legend, he seeks to give a personal interpretation to their sentiments or their acts. The mysteries are simply narratives put into action and dialogue, with occasionally the addition of a few episodes of pure invention, and the detailed development of features which, far from being characteristic of the subject, are often of a nature to alter its true character. The form is nearly always the same, lines of eight syllables rhyming two by two. Only in many of them a lyric element is mixed up with the purely dialogued element, and it is here that the poet especially strives to show his talent and his style; but these passages have rarely any real poetic merit. As for the dialogue, it is usually limited to the clear exposure of the subject of the piece; with the best of our dramatists, however, this dialogue presents passages remarkably conceived and written, while with the greater number it is dull, trivial, or inflated, and remains generally far beneath what it might have been. Needless to say that the authors have not the least idea of the appropriate colour of the epochs and countries where the action takes place, and that they give to all their personages —all in representing often, from their own sources but unconsciously, antiquated or exotic society—the ideas, sentiments, and language of their time.

What made the great success of the mysteries—in taking the word in its widest sense—and what still constitutes their chief interest is the way they were represented. The actors were not professional comedians, but men (very rarely women) of the middle class or the people, and often priests, the latter being chosen above all for the *rôles* of Christ, God the Father, and the saints. We should, nevertheless, make exception for the members of confraternities specially vowed to these representations, such as there were in Paris, at Rouen, and elsewhere, who were in a measure professionals and had a fixed theatre in a closed and covered place. In general a theatre was expressly constructed for the representation, which disappeared afterwards. This was the case always when towns organised the representation either of some celebrated mystery, or of a mystery

ordered from an experienced "facteur," usually an ecclesiastic. The scenic arrangement was conceived as in the earlier religious drama, whose development, issued from liturgy and the Church, we have explained. All the places of the action, from the beginning, were put before the public and supplied with part of the personages, while those who were to act later were seated on benches on either side of the stage. This was sometimes immense, and occupied one of the faces of a vast public place. It presented always, as well as the various *mansions*, often very numerous, a large space in the foreground (park) where the voyages, combats, executions, etc. took place. To the right rose Paradise, where God the Father, either alone or with the Son and the Virgin Mary, was seated on His throne surrounded by angels. On the left the gate of Hell was seen, represented by a monster's maw, which opened and cast forth flames when the demons issued from it or entered in. Such an arrangement did not admit of decoration in the sense we understand it, but the mansions which represented towns, temples, palaces, lent themselves to rich figurative architectural effects. There were also mountains, forests, seas, lakes or rivers with boats moving upon them. The art of machinery was extraordinarily advanced: the most surprising miracles were accomplished with the aid of "feintes" which created illusion: angels were seen to descend and ascend to Heaven; martyrs, with the help of dexterously substituted lay figures, were made to undergo the most atrocious tortures, prolonged with the greatest good-will. Across the vast scene a crowd of personages went to and fro, and in certain cases reached many hundreds. Their costumes were one of the great attractions of the spectacle. For emperors, kings, great lords, and knights they were as splendid as possible, naturally without any heed of local colour; for the divers personages, priests of Christianity as well as of Judaism, paganism, Mahometanism, they were the sacerdotal vestments of the churches, lent by the clergy usually with eagerness, for the representation, we cannot too insistently

repeat, was above all a religious act, and often on the stage were reliquaries containing the relics of saints whose life was being represented.

When a town decided to play a great mystery, it was an important matter in which every one was intensely interested, often during more than a year. Once a copy of the work, new or celebrated, was made, the parts were distributed between the voluntary actors, and the repetitions, conducted by the "meneur du jeu," were necessarily numerous before all the players were sufficiently disciplined, sure of themselves, and capable of fulfilling their functions. Meanwhile the stage was constructed, the platforms and the boxes reserved for personages of mark, which surrounded the pit where the people crowded; the "feintes," the musical accompaniment, of great importance, and the costumes, were prepared. On the eve of the fixed day, the whole troop of players rode round the town to the blare of trumpets; it was the "montre" which announced the coming marvels. At last the representation took place, in face of a crowd come in troops not only from every corner of the town, but from all the outskirts, and often from a great distance. It began in the morning, generally by a sermon or a prologue, was interrupted towards noon for the repast, and then continued until evening. Often it lasted several entire days: its length, like its magnificence and the number of personages, went on steadily increasing: there were mysteries that lasted ten, twenty, and even forty consecutive days, during which all activity was suspended. The spectators paid more or less dearly for their seats, and the town or the contractors of the play thus recovered the considerable expense they had been put to. They did not always recover them, but they were not usually guided by a love of lucre any more than the players, who demanded no salary (at most an indemnity for those who temporarily abandoned their means of livelihood). For all it was a pious work and a pleasure as well, and the number of representations of the kind—we are acquainted with many, but with certainly far less than there

took place—prove how deep was the religious feeling of the contemporaries of Charles VII., Louis XI., and Charles VIII. Hardly less so was that of the subjects of Louis XII., and even of Francis I. It was only in 1542 that the mysteries, become objects of scandal through the new spirit which manifested itself in religious matters, were forbidden by a decree of the Parliament of Paris.

We have the text of about twenty mysteries, properly speaking, that is, of those devoted, as their name indicates, to the fundamental mysteries of Christianity. The most numerous and important are the variants of the *Passion*, which from an early hour, as we have seen, were extended so as to become a representation of the entire life of Christ. From the first half of the fifteenth century there were *Passions;* we have mentioned Mercadé's, already greatly developed. But these efforts were eclipsed by Arnoul Greban's *Passion*, written towards 1450. Arnoul Greban was born at Le Mans towards 1420, and died there old and laden with high Church offices. He composed his *Passion* in Paris, where he was connected with the schools of Notre Dame, and probably for the old Confraternity, desirous of renewing its repertory. It is a serious work, though, following tradition, the author has mixed up adventitious elements, some of which, like the scenes of the shepherds of the Nativity, are rather vulgar, but in parts graceful enough; others, like the devil scenes, are at times stamped with a striking note of desperate irony; whilst others, such as the interminable scenes where Christ's torturers make a tremendous display of ferocious joviality, and season their work with hideous witticisms, are unhappily the longest as they were the most popular in those days. Their equivalent is to be found in all the mysteries. In the very treatment of the great subject he had to represent, Arnoul Greban specially prided himself on being a good theologian and an orthodox narrator. He has scarcely borrowed anything from apocryphal sources, and limited himself to putting the gospels into dialogue. What he most readily develops are the parts of reasoning and eloquence, like

John the Baptist's harangue, the objections of the Jewish doctors and the arguments opposed to them, the discourses and lessons of Jesus. Faithful to a tradition which may be traced far back, he sets his vast drama between two scenes which pass in heaven: Peace and Mercy ask God to pardon original sin to the human race, but Truth and Justice are opposed to it, man being unable to furnish an adequate satisfaction, which God alone could provide by becoming man; one of the persons of the Trinity resolves upon this voluntary sacrifice, and once His terrestrial life terminated by an expiatory death, His descent to hell, and return to heaven, Justice and Truth embrace Peace and Mercy, and harmony is restored in heaven and upon earth. We cannot fail to recognise the grandeur of such a conception, and the interest it gives to all the episodes of the drama. The drama in itself, as we have already seen, hardly deserves this name, since the action lacks the struggle necessary as the basis of dramatic work. The *rôle* of Jesus is wanting in shades and in truth; most of the others are rather uninteresting. We must except Mary Magdalen, whose mundane existence Greban has depicted agreeably enough, and very accurately her sudden transformation at the Saviour's word; Judas, whose temptations (for that matter very vulgar) and despair he has expressed well; and especially Mary, whose nature he has attempted, a psychology extremely difficult to imagine with the data of dogma, and whose joys, tendernesses, and above all anguishes and sorrows terminated by supernatural certitudes, he has rendered with a simplicity penetrating at times.

Greban's work, which ran through four days, had a great success. It was abridged, rehandled, fragmented in divers fashions. Of these recasts, by far the most important is that of the Angevin doctor, John Michel, represented at Angers in 1486, and later repeatedly all over France, and printed almost at once and often. It does not include the Resurrection, and yet ran through six days, thanks to the amplifications it was subjected to. These amplifications bear principally upon the accessory and episodical parts. John Michel took

largely from the Apocrypha, and developed passages which Greban had scarcely indicated : such as the "worldliness" of Magdalen and her brother Lazarus, made the subject of a series of scenes of pure amusement ; or the conversation of the shepherds turned into pastorals in the mythological taste of the time. More of a poet than Greban, and unlike him, more heedful of amusing than edifying, John Michel here and there is not lacking in pathos. He seems to have invented a scene between the Virgin and her Son which has remained famous, and with the germ of which tradition scarce furnished him. On the other hand, the scenes of devils, executioners, thieves, etc. were immoderately expanded by him, and the comic parts became more gross : he was chiefly preoccupied with the magnificence, the amplitude, and variety of the spectacle : it was to this he owed the triumphant success of his piece.

It was, for that matter, the taste of the times. Arnoul's own brother, Simon Greban, perhaps with the collaboration of his elder, wrote the vastest mystery which exists, that of the *Acts of the Apostles*, which runs to nearly 62,000 lines, employs nearly five hundred personages, and took forty days to play. In this work, where the action successively transported, according to the apocryphal legends of the apostles, into the most diverse lands of the known world, there can be no question of unity or dominant thought. There is absolutely nothing more than a spectacle of which edification is but a pretext, and which is chiefly interesting by its pomp, the immense number of "feintes" necessitated by the innumerable miracles or supplices it parades, and which rests the public by as many familiar and humorous scenes as possible. The author endeavours, at the same time, in the serious parts to raise his style, and often takes the lyric tone and form. He is more inflated than his brother, and already belongs to a great extent to the coming school of the "Rhétoriqueurs," who in fact greatly esteemed him.

The mystery of the *Old Testament* is almost as long as that of the *Acts of the Apostles ;* but, strictly speaking, it is

only a compilation of little mysteries tracing back to various epochs, and which were often separately played. However, the entire chain which binds them together has been considered as forming a certain unity; and we know that the whole was played at a single performance during twenty consecutive days.

The *Acts of the Apostles* and the *Old Testament* are no longer "mysteries" in the full sense of the word; they are scenic arrangements of edifying stories. The same character is evident in the mysteries consecrated to the saints, generally the patron saints of the towns where the representations take place. None of them, we may say, has any literary value, save perhaps the *Life of Saint Louis*, by Pierre Gringoire, which belongs to the reign of Louis XII. The greater part is but a saint's legend cut up into scenes lengthily and awkwardly dialogued, with the addition of buffooneries at times obscene, and the eternal facetiousness of devils and executioners. This repertory is a fertile mine of information for the archæologist and the philologist, but bears slightly upon literature.

We must put aside two works which for different reasons merit attention. The first is the *Siege of Orleans*, which was composed, at least in part, some ten years after the deliverance of the town, solemnly represented many times at Orleans, and was more than once rehandled and enlarged. Many of the personages put on the scene assisted or even took part in these representations, and thus gave the piece an historical character probably unique. We are reminded of the *Persæ* of Æschylus. Unfortunately the fact of being a contemporary representation of a great national event is all that the two works have in common. Our mystery, written in eight-syllabled lines, is almost altogether lacking in the enthusiasm and poetry we would wish for it; in compensation, it is honestly written, and renders justice even to the English. The Maid naturally plays a considerable part, and the importance of her action is brought well into light; but the author, who had probably seen with his eyes this extraordinary figure, was not able in painting it to rise above his customary mediocre verbiage.

It is also to Orleans, but in a quite other domain, that the mystery of *Troy* leads us, composed by Jacques Milet there in 1450–52, therefore almost at the same time that Arnoul Greban wrote his *Passion*. Milet's originality consists in having applied the form of religious representations to altogether profane matter. Here was a new path which might lead (like the mystery of the *Siege of Orleans*) to a drama at once national, lay, and modern. But Milet, though his work was much appreciated, had no imitators. The work in itself is only curious. The history of Troy by Guido Colonna is cut up into scenes dexterously enough, and at times even with talent. Jacques Milet's name deserves to remain in the history of the French theatre. He died young, and left us no other writing.

A serious French drama might have been developed in yet another way, thanks to the *Moralities*. Thus were named pieces in which a moral truth, of course nearly always of a religious character, was brought into light. These pieces, conforming to the taste of the age, were generally comprised of personifications, often odd, which we find it difficult to imagine on the stage. Many are of a satirical character, and touch on the political events of the day (this kind flourished especially under Louis XII.); it is thus connected with the *sotie*. Others are purely moral, but of a humorous turn. But some there are which are simply the scenic arrangement of some story of moral tendency, such as the morality of the *Emperor who condemned his nephew to death*, where an act of high and pitiless justice is represented. There was the germ of the drama in the modern sense in these pieces, which, unfortunately, did not develop. If it had been cultivated, it might, with the profane transformation of the mysteries, have served as the starting-point in the evolution of a modern drama truly national, whereas the latter began by first a servile imitation, then a laborious adaptation of antique tragedy.

The morality, we have said, at times touches closely on the *sotie*. The latter has its roots in old customs of the

Middle Ages, which expanded chiefly in the fifteenth century. Then were formed in several towns, especially in Paris and Rouen, companies of "fous," of "sots," of "cornards," etc., under the direction of a "prince," of a "mère sotte," of a "mère folle," who at certain periods gave merry representations where the company, arranged in grotesque costumes, recited pleasantries, habitually improvised, of a satirical and often licentious character. The *sotie* flourished above all at the end of this epoch and until the sixteenth century. It very often had the character of a political satire, at times most audacious. Personifications reappear here, garbed as "sots" and "sottes," and offer to general ridicule their pretensions, their oddities and vices. Authority sometimes made use of this means of influencing opinion and attacking its enemies; but often also it grew alarmed, and under Francis I. put an end to such bold licence. The style of the *soties* is generally obscure and difficult, full of allusions which escape us. Much of their attraction lay in the gambols and somersaults of the players as well as in their grimaces and the eccentricity of their costumes. Note besides that the *sot*, dear to the popular public, often figured in the mysteries and moralities, either mixed up in the action or left outside it, when his *rôle* consisted in more or less pungent facetiæ, and was often left to the player's improvisation. From this type derives the Spanish *gracioso*, the English clown, the German *Hanswurst*, certain Italian buffoons, and more than one of the characters we meet with in French drama until the seventeenth century.

Farce also seems to have been oftenest an accessory element in serious representations, either preceding each of the "journées" of a mystery, or serving as intermediary, or else, as in André de la Vigne's mystery of *Saint Martin*, as an episode in the action itself. The habit of acting little comic scenes, in public or private gatherings, had never completely ceased since antiquity, and we have mentioned in the thirteenth century the play of the *Boy and the Blind Man*, which, without bearing the name of farce, is a real farce in the sense of this word in the

fifteenth century, that is, a short comic scene borrowed from the observation of real life. Farces are generally very short, and are limited to the representation of an episode so to say momentary, and which scarce deserves the name of action. They are most frequently scenes of conjugal life, burgess or popular, where, as may be imagined, the husbands are generally fooled, but where also the obstinacy of wives and their pretensions to rule are often made excellent fun of. Or they ridicule pedants, boasters, hypocrites, and delight in showing up the tricks of clever sharpers. Many belong to the judicial world, and come from the corporation of law clerks, whose influence we have already pointed out in the case of Coquillart. The best of all the farces of this period belongs to this category, a veritable masterpiece of its kind, *Master Peter Patelin*. This celebrated farce stands out amongst all others, not only because of the excellence of its composition and execution, the firm drawing of character, the drollery of situations and style, but because it is much longer and contains a real action, or rather an extremely skilful fusion of two actions in one: the draper William sells to Patelin, a needy lawyer, six ells of cloth, and when he arrives to get his money and eat the goose Patelin has promised him, he finds the latter in bed, pretending to be dying, with his wife in attendance, who swears that her husband has not left his bed for weeks. This is the first theme, which would have sufficed for an ordinary farce. This same William has a shepherd who kills his sheep and whom he has up before the judge: the shepherd's lawyer advises him to play the idiot and to answer nothing but *bee* to every question. The shepherd is therefore dismissed by the judge, but when the lawyer claims his fee, he also answers him *bee*, and the lawyer is the victim of his own cunning. Here is a second theme equally sufficient for a farce. But the unknown author of *Patelin* unites them in the most humorous fashion: the shepherd's lawyer is the same one who swindled the draper, so that the poor draper, who recognises at the bar the fellow he left on his death-bed, loses his wits completely, gets lost in

his two affairs, mixes them up so constantly in his speech that the judge, too at his wits' end in trying to understand him, impatiently exclaims: *He! revenez à vos moutons!* This piece, which is quite above every known farce, may very well be the earliest of those which have reached us. Villon seems to make allusion to it as early as 1461. That would make us believe that a great quantity of these little pieces belonging to the first part of our period has been lost. This loss is to be deplored, for the farces, besides the often humorous features they contain, are extremely valuable for the knowledge of customs and familiar speech. We possess over a hundred; the greater number, however, belong to the sixteenth century, but in kind they did not change up to the moment of their disappearance, and we meet with a partial survival of them even in Molière. A few are pleasant enough, like the farce of *Calbain*, on the obstinacy of women, of the *Cuvier*, on their domestic tyranny, of the *Cornette*, on their frivolity, of *Georges le Veau*, who reminds us of *Georges Dandin*, etc. Others are mere shapeless sketches. Many of them are only known to us through bad popular editions, generally of much later date, where the text has been lamentably altered. Certainly there were infinitely more than we possess.

We must also connect with the farces the *monologues* and *sermons joyeux*. The sermons joyeux are parodies of religious sermons which astonish us by their audacity and freedom often pushed to the furthest limits. They frequently served as an introduction to a serious representation. They make the panegyric of some imaginary saint, such as St. Tortu (the vine-root) or St. Andouille, or develop a theme of cynical morals. Among the monologues, some there are which are simply imitations of the "advertisements" of the mountebanks of fairs,—already in the thirteenth century we have mentioned Rustebeuf's *Dit de l'Herberie;* but the most interesting are those where the monologue is pronounced by the hero of the adventure which forms the subject. As with the farce, here it seems that the best specimen of the kind is also the earliest.

The monologue of the *Franc-archer de Bagnolet* was written in 1468 on a war between Louis XI. and the Duke of Brittany, where the "francs-archers," a militia instituted by Charles VII., played an inglorious part. This piece is a little masterpiece, where the author has solved the difficult problem of making a monologue hold real dramatic action, and not painting of comic character under its divers aspects. The franc-archer Pernot is boasting of his prowesses and plunders, when suddenly the scarecrow of a hemp-field stands before him, holding an arquebuse, with the red cross of the Bretons on his breast. Pernot, terrified, kneels down before this imaginary enemy, pays him homage and begs his pardon, reciting aloud the *Confiteor;* but the wind blows the scarecrow round, and on his back is the white cross of the French: fresh terror, fresh supplications of the false warrior. Finally the scarecrow falls down and Pernot perceives his error; he becomes arrogant again: *On se raille, ce cuidé je, des gens de guerre!* and triumphantly he carries off the scarecrow. Never before nor since, not even in our days when the monologue for a time enjoyed a great vogue, has any one been able to make it, as here, really dramatic: it is always a mere recital, more or less humorous, of a past adventure, a recital to which the costume and the rendering of the personage alone lend a theatrical character. Of this kind Coquillart has written, with a somewhat elaborate but real wit, a monologue which tempted many imitators. It is about one of those pretentious lovers, a bit of a nincompoop, depicted by Martial d'Auvergne and Coquillart himself elsewhere, and who relates amusingly how, not without difficulty, he got out of a hole a husband's unexpected return had got him into.

In their entirety, the farces, soties, and monologues, which, it is easy to understand, are often confused one with another, form certainly one of the most interesting and curious products of the French spirit in the fifteenth century.

THE END

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